VALLEY VOICE

Volume XXXVI No. 1 • 7 January, 2016 www.ourvalleyvoice.com

Small Community of Traver Reaps Big Improvements, More to Come

Nancy Vigran

For many it is a stop for gas between Visalia and Fresno. For some it is a destination to shop for road trip munchies on the way up north. But, for 700 Tulare County residents, Traver is the place they call home. And their home has seen a lot of improvements lately, thanks to county supervisors and staff, as well as other partnering agencies.

In Traver, like many other small, rural communities, the school is the hub of the community, said Eric Coyne, Tulare County Economic Development coordinator. It is around Traver Elementary School, where a series of public improvements began.

Adopted in 2006, the Tulare County Strategic Management System sets forth several strategic goals to guide the development of all county policy

- Enhance Safety and Security
- Enhance Economic Well-Being
- Enhance Quality of Life
- Improve Organizational Performance

"Embracing this guiding policy, Tulare County Supervisor Steven Worthley challenged the Resource Management Agency to come up with a comprehensive plan to make a series of significant infrastructure improvements in Traver with an eye toward enhancing public safety, economic well-being and the quality of life of all area residents," Coyne said.

That was in 2013. In the spring of 2014, work began.

"The county completed $180,000 in safe routes to school improvements along Canal Street, right in front of Traver Elementary School. Improvements include a concrete school bus pullout,

TRAVER continued on **12 »**

An artists' rendering of Visalia's new VECC building. Courtesy/City of Visalia

Visalia City Council Approves $11 Million Contract to Construct VECC Building

Catherine Doe

At the January 4 Visalia City Council work session council members voted 5-0 awarding an $11 million-bid to build the Visalia Emergency Communication Center (VECC). The winning bid went to Oral E. Micham Inc., a construction firm out of Woodlake.

Two construction firms' bids came in lower than Oral E. Micham's. Both firms ended up withdrawing after they discovered mathematical errors in their calculations, leaving Oral E. Micham with the lowest bid.

The new VECC building will be Visalia's first civic investment in East Visalia and construction is scheduled to take 14 months, finishing up in March, 2017. Two more months will be needed to set up the facility in terms of furniture, equipment and personnel. The projected official opening is for the summer of 2017.

The VECC building is the first of three buildings planned as Visalia's Civic Center Complex. Because of the expense of the VECC, a new city hall and public safety building will not become a reality for several decades, though space for their construction has already been designated next to the VECC.

The VECC building consists of a new 18,790 square-foot emergency communications center and sits on 4.2 acres, including curb, gutter, sidewalk, paving, landscaping and fencing. The VECC building will house the 911 Dispatch Center that will operate 24 hours a day, the Emergency Operations Center, the Fire Department Administration, the Traffic Management Center and the Information Services Center. The Information Services Center will serve as the hub for city information systems and technology management. This area will house the city's computer networking and communications systems in a secured essential services building.

The building itself is projected to cost $8,317,400 and the site work which includes a huge and expensive generator will be $2,477,800. The secured parking will cost $165,000. Oral E. Micham's bid was a total of $11, 316,000.

To raise money to pay for

VECC continued on **11 »**

Tulare County Board of Supervisors Chairman Mike Ennis.

Tulare County Supes Appoint New Chair

Staff Reports

At the December 5 Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting Chairman Steve Worthley handed over the gavel to Supervisor Mike Ennis. In his short farewell speech he outlined some of the highlights of 2015. Worthley emphasized the financial health of the county in that property tax assessments went up by $1.5 billion and the county was able to put more into its reserves.

In terms of capital projects, the county is in escrow to buy the Cigna Building on Cypress Avenue in Visalia and it should be closing at the end of the month. The county has also engaged in $80 million in road improvements, including many "safe routes to school" projects. The Tulare County Sheriff's Department has been working on the new prisons in Porterville and Sequoia Fields. The drought was the biggest news for 2015, and the county provided bottled water to many communities and has been engaged in improving the water infrastructure in disadvantaged communities.

Finally, Worthley wanted to point out that the county has entered into two-year contracts with every bargaining unit except one and successfully negotiated wages and hours. He also wanted to recognize Tulare County's new Chief Administrative Officer, Mike Spata, saying that the county was in excellent hands.

With the changing of the guard Supervisor Mike Ennis becomes Chairperson and Supervisor Allen Ishida becomes the Vice Chairperson. This was the fifth time Worthley has been the chairperson of the Tulare County board of Supervisors.

Visalia and Fresno Present Their Final Incentive Packages to Lure Nordstrom

Catherine Doe

"Now it's in the hands of Nordstrom's number crunchers and advisors," said Visalia City Council Member Greg Collins.

Final offers were submitted at the end of December so the high-end retail company could make its decision between Visalia and Fresno on where to put their new West Coast Distribution Center. Nordstrom is expected to make its final decision during the latter part of January. In the meantime, both cities continue to battle it out in the media over who has the most desirable location.

Visalia and Fresno might work the media, but neither were interested in getting into a bidding war after submitting their final offers right before Christmas. According to The Fresno Bee, in their final attempt to sweeten the deal, Fresno County offered to help the City of Fresno in their workforce investment and training. The deal included possibly paying a portion of Nordstrom workers' salaries while they do job training. After Fresno County stepped up to the plate, Adam Peck, executive director of the Workforce Investment Board for Tulare County, made a similar offer.

News of Nordstrom's fulfillment center being built in the Central Valley broke December 16. Visalia officials had been working with site locators for months but were not told the name of the company. Fresno had been contacted by Nordstrom in June.

At the December 21 Visalia City Council work session the council voted 5 – 0 in favor of an incentive package to convince Nordstrom to locate their E-Center in Visalia's Industrial Park. Fresno City Council had voted on an incentive package the week before and Visalia matched their package dollar for dollar. The E- Center, or fulfillment center, would service the entire Western United States, and could provide up to 1875 jobs to Visalia and the surrounding area. Nordstrom does $2.4 billion in Internet sales annually.

California industrial park developer Pat Daniels of MSJ Partners said that the property owner "priced their property very aggressively," putting Fresno at a significant disadvantage. The Visalia property would end up costing Nordstrom $2 million less. Daniels has been negotiating with Nordstrom for the property owners for about a year. The property is located in Visalia's Industrial Park north of Riggin Avenue and east of

NORDSTROM continued on **5 »**

ARMSTRONG
Property Management

Would you like to increase your occupancy and lower your expenses? Give us a call. Let ***us*** *save you valuable time and energy*.

We specialize in **Residential**, **Commercial**, **& Common Interest Developments** (Homeowners Associations)

Not all management companies are created equal. What makes us different?

- Well trained staff with Certified Managers
- In house maintenance services
- Monthly property inspections
- Long term experienced employees – Sixteen employees in the Visalia office
- Available to the public, including lunch hours and 24 hour emergency line
- Free rental lists to prospective tenants
- Direct deposit of monthly proceeds for owners and online payment options for tenants
- We fully screen applicants, including online credit checks
- No tenant application fee. Most companies charge $15-$30 per application
- Our business is fully insured.
- We place ads in multiple internet locations and QR codes on signage
- We use California Association of Realtors® forms that receive automatic legal updates
- Constantly training staff and upgrading our technology
- Competitive Fees

Being active in the community, **Armstrong Property Management** has received numerous awards, and recognitions including:

- ❖ Certificate of Congressional Recognition by Congressman Devin Nunes
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce Medium Business of the Year Finalist

After being in business in Visalia for over 35 years, we know the Valley. Our staff is comprised of long term veterans along with well-trained young college graduates, which equates to experience, energy and innovation. If your property needs full service management from a team of hardworking professionals, give us a call. We can facilitate a change with a few days notice.

Jim Armstrong, CPM
President/CEO
Broker/Realtor
jim@armstrong-mgmt.com

Christopher Zulik, GRI, CCRM
Director of Operations
Rental Management/Sales
chris@armstrong-mgmt.com

Cruz Ann Duarte
Central Coast Sales Division
"Your Realtor &
Friend for Life"
www.cruzannrealestate.com

1005 N. Demaree Street Visalia CA 93291
(559) 733-1321, (800) 401-5751
FAX (559) 733-1729
www.armstrong-mgmt.com

FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Ah, 2016!

Writing this first column of 2016, I'd like to begin by wishing everyone a happy New Year.

But I can't.

I can't wish a happy 2016 for ISIS--or for extremists of any stripe, anywhere--and I certainly can't wish a happy year to those who for their own reasonsactively harm others. I can only wish they stop, or are stopped.

I look around, sometimes, and remain entirely unconvinced that we're not all, in fact, in hell.

The world is a mess. It's over-crowded. The climate seems to be changing in ways that will likely prove unsavory for us.

Pollution is rampant in all four of the classical elements of air, earth, water and fire.The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse--Conquest, War, Famine& Death--are having a field day.

There are too many infirmed, too many impoverished. Too many are refugees. There are too many lone wolves, apparently, and not enough vigilant people to adequately counteract them. There are too many bowl games, and not enough adequate football to justify the orgy of television revenue. There are too many Republican contenders for the presidency--in fact, there are too many Republicans.

And then there's Donald Trump.

It's as the Hopi would say: Koyaanisqatsi--"life out of balance."

Contrast this with "Mother Nature,"which we tend to anthropomorphize as female, and nurturing, although--even If you've never been on safari--it should be abundantly clear that there is nothing whatsoever nurturing about Nature. We live, literally, in a dog-eat-dog world.

But as a system--as a biosphere, say--Nature is self-sustaining and perfect. Nature, at least unmolested by us, is balanced.

Still, it's funny what we'll do as a species to make sense of our surroundings, whether our faith is placed in science, astrology or religion.

It somehow seems fitting that, in Christianity at least, God is anthropomorphized as a father figure.

Can you imagine dear old Mom countenancing the kind of sacrifice required of Jesus? Or then leaving her kids in the lurch and skedaddling for going on two thousand years now?

Ah, 2016!

For the first time in half a dozen years I'm feeling semi-hopeful: This year, our magazine--*Discover*--will re-emerge. This year, our daughter--the last of five--will be a senior in high school.

Which means that, this year, for the first time in nearly 30 years, there is at long last a light at the end of the primary caregiving tunnel. I've been a father since I was three weeks into being 24 years old. This year, maybe, we'll go somewhere spontaneously.

I'm not asking to ever be relieved of the worry or support--that would be akin to asking for the power of flight.

But I would like to see a movie, maybe, and not be distracted by what I fear might be the hi-jinks going on at home.

Or the logistics of dinner. The logistics of everything. The co-ordination of cars. Adjudicating arguments.

They say, "The more things change, the more they stay the same."

Nonsense.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

THE VALLEY VOICE IS YOUR NEWSPAPER

Published by The Valley Voice, LLC.

Publisher/Editor: Joseph Oldenbourg (joseph@ourvalleyvoice.com)
(559) 972-7778

Associate Editor: Nancy Vigran (nancy@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Reporters:
Catherine Doe (catherine@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Dave Adalian (dave@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Stefan Barros — sports (stefan@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Production/Website: Tony Maldonado – tony@ourvalleyvoice.com

Sales:
Nancy Vigran (nancy@ourvalleyvoice.com)
Jan Krafve (jan@ourvalleyvoice.com)

Contact us & share your opinion: www.ourvalleyvoice.com
PO Box 44064 • Lemon Cove, CA 93244

Political Fix

Catherine Doe

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2016 ELECTIONS AND LOOKING BACK AT 2015

We Need To Talk About Trump

My 21-year-old sonsits in front of the TV while eating his lunch and frets over Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump's polling numbers. One of the last polls before the New Year had Mr. Trump at 38%. After months of hearing the same numbers, it's easy to believe thatMr. Trump has 38% support of all voters. But these respondents are likely Republican voters. Also, it's one thing for a respondent to tell a pollster over the phone, "Yea, I'd vote for Trump," and another to make the effort to get to the ballot box and put a check next to controversial politician's name.

When one takes into account that 42% of American voters are either Republican, or lean Republican, that 38% translates into slightly under 20% of the general public. Twenty percent is nothing to sneeze at, but it won't win a general election. Seeing as his base is White, uneducated, middle-aged men, he may not even end up winning many primaries. Right now Mr. Trump has double-digit lead in the polls but that could be an illusion. Iowa will hold its primary on February 1, New Hampshire on the 9th, and South Carolina the 20th. I predict that after those first primaries are done a completely new picture will emerge, with completely new front runners, and I don't think Mr. Trump will be among them.

All of the candidates, Democrats and Republicans, are hammering the voters in those three states with campaign stops, phone calls and television ads. A Jeb Bush consultant said that over half of Iowans will be making up their minds this month, and the same is probably true in New Hampshire. So it's worth it for the laggards, even Mr. Bush, to pound the pavement.

A political blogger on Huffington Post pointed out that liberals and conservatives are "slowly wrapping their minds around the concept that Donald Trump could win the Republican nomination." With Mr. Trump as the Republican nominee, the down ballot Republicans will have a difficult road to victory as Democrats will be coming out of the woodwork to make sure that Mr. Trump does not take residence at the White House.

"The Republican Party will be defined by the candidate who wins the nomination, not the candidates who lost," said a Rubio party insider. Establishment Republicans have acknowledged their fate wouldn't be much better with Ted Cruz at the top of the ballot.

Some political pundits go even further, saying that it is not impossible that Donald Trump becomes America's next president--which brings us right back to my son's fretting over his lunch while watching the news. It isn't impossible, it's just almost impossible. A recent finding by a Marco Rubio pollster said that the Republican presidential nominee will need 40% of the Latino vote to win the White House. Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney only carried 23% of the Latino vote in 2012, and that is without calling them rapists and drug dealers.

During his many stump speeches Mr. Bush extolled the New Hampshire voters, "The question is will New Hampshire want to support a guy who might tarnish this extraordinary reputation that you have, which is first-in-nation status…. New Hampshire is an extraordinary part of this process and I don't think Donald Trump is going to survive New Hampshire to be honest with you, because I have too much confidence in you all."

I said in the September 17 Political Fix that I had changed my mind about wanting to see a debate between Hillary Clinton and Presidential hopeful Carly Fiorina. I'd rather see a debate between Ms. Clinton and Mr. Trump. Now I may get my wish.

The Best Local Race Ever

The biggest and most news-making race of the year is going to be Tulare County Supervisor District 3 between incumbent Phil Cox and Visalia City Council member AmyShuklian. Someone else could enter the race as the filing period is open until March 11, but it would be a waste of time and money unless the individual had similar name recognition. Ms. Shuklian and Mr. Cox have already been featured several times in Political Fix, where I have disproportionately criticized Supervisor Cox. The *Valley Voice* does not endorse candidates, and our criticism doesn't mean that he would be a better or worse supervisor than Ms. Shuklian.

That being said,I was sorely disappointed that no one representing the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) was present at the Visalia City Council meeting to support the city's efforts to win over Nordstrom. A proposed Nordstrom fulfillment center is the biggest thing happening right now in the Central Valley, and would be one of the top employers in the county. Representatives from Dinuba, Porterville, Tulare and Farmersville were there and verbalized their respective city's support--but the TCBOS was MIA.

Seeing as the City of Visalia is in Supervisor Cox' district, it would have made sense that he make a showing at the council meeting to demonstrate to Nordstrom the county's united front with the city. Ms. Shuklian emphasized that what is good for Visalia is good for the county and that the county coffers stand to greatly benefit from a million square-foot distribution center. "So where was he?" she queried.

Nordstrom has not yet made up its mind, so far be it for the *Valley Voice's* first articlein mid December to bring up anything remotely negative about choosing Visalia. But now, George Hostetter's article in *TheFresno Bee* let the cat out of the bag saying about Fresno, "I don't know City of Visalia/Tulare County politics. I can't believe things are as bitter there as they are here."

It's true that the TCBOS should have been actively involved with the City of Visalia in this process, but it is also true that politics are not so bitter here in Tulare County as they are in Fresno County. The relationship has actually evolved from bitter to just petty – so all is good here and Nordstrom should pick Visalia if they do not like nasty politics.

The Magical Mystery Tour That Is the 26th Assembly Race

So far the race for the State Assembly District 26 is between a no-name candidate and a barely-known incumbent. Whether Assembly member Devon Mathisis even aware that Porterville native Alexzander Acevedo is challenging him is unknown, like many things about this race. But Mr. Acevedo is quite confident that he will win. At the ripe old age of 23 he said this isn't his first political race and that he is used to being the underdog. He wasn't clear on what political races he was referring to, but said that he had volunteered for State Senator Andy Vidak, so he "knows what happens inside campaigns."

This may not be his first campaign, but it will be the first time in his life he has voted. Mr. Acevedo has no record of voting in Tulare County andI am assuming he might take the time to register in 2016,at least for the sake of voting for himself.

I called Mr. Acevedo around New Year's Day wanting to see if he was ready to give me that interview he promised me months ago. He said that his platform is set but he doesn't want to reveal its contents until February.

"People might forget what's in it if it comes out too early."

He also wants to keep the name of his campaign manager confidential because he wasn't sure who I was and that "anyone calling could say they were from the media." In fact, he wouldn't be giving any information out to any media until he saw their tax identification number and they could prove they were who they said they were.

I asked Mr. Acevedo, "You don't read the *Valley Voice*?" He said "Of course, but not every day."

In the Mathis' camp, the *Valley Voice* finally got its first correspondence since the Director of Communications, Matt Shupe, got angry with me over a Political Fix blurb. The correspondence was a newsletter sent to me but addressed

POLITICAL FIX continued on **4 »**

The outside walls are going up for the new Exeter Rite Aid building at the corner of Belmont Avenue and Visalia Road. Valley Voice/Nancy Vigran

Exeter Seeing New Development

Nancy Vigran

Lately Exeter has seen a lot of dirt being pushed around and walls going up near the corner of Visalia Road and Belmont Avenue. A little more than a year ago, the Dollar General went up and opened next to Burger King.

Now walls are going up on the corner for a new home to Rite Aid, currently located kitty-corner next to Save Mart. More recently, ground has been broken for a new 24-unit housing project just south of the corner down Belmont.

"It is all part of the city's southwest development plan," said City Manager Randy Groom.

The apartment facility is being developed by the Housing Authority of Tulare County on excess property purchased from the Exeter Union School District.

"It is the kind of project we want to have here," Groom said.

The city looked at other Housing Authority projects in other communities such as Farmersville and found them to be well maintained, Groom added.

When completed, the facility will provide affordable homes to 24 local families, with an income of 60% or less of the median average, said Ken Kugler, the Housing Authority's executive director.

There will be two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments, a community center, covered patio and open space, Kugler said.

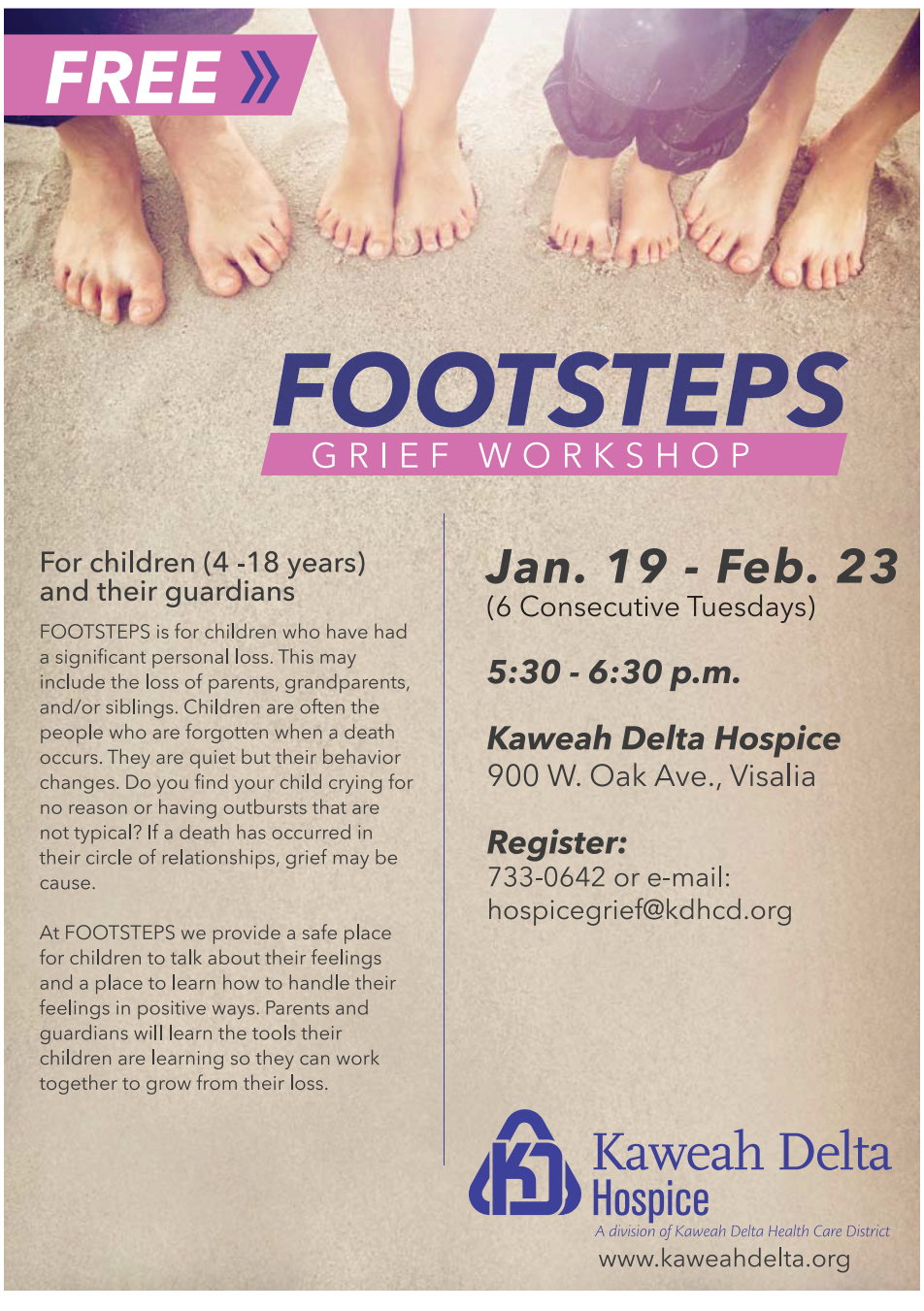
Exeter has not had an affordable project site built since 1987 or '88, he said. It was time, the Housing Authority felt, and so moved forward with the project.

The Housing Authority just recently completed another apartment complex in Porterville consisting of 80 units at the corner of Henderson Avenue and Newcomb Street. The Housing Authority has been overrun with applicants for these apartments, with approximately 28 of them already approved, Kugler said.

The Exeter apartment project is expected to be completed sometime in September or October, and while the Housing Authority will maintain a waiting list, formal applications will not be taken until sometime in June, Kugler said. Applications cannot be older than 90 days prior to move in.

The new Rite Aid building anticipates a grand opening sometime in the spring, according to Kristin Kellum, a public relations specialist for the company. The development was started prior to the Walgreens buyout of the Rite Aid in October. According to CNN, the merger of the two pharmacy companies cost Walgreens $17.2 billion.

The Rite Aid store across the street will move into the new building. It is not yet clear whether the store will retain the Rite Aid name or become a Walgreens. No plans have been revealed for the building Rite Aid will vacate.



Political Fix

Continued from p. 3

to the editor--classy. The newsletter reviewed all of Mr. Mathis' legislative successes for 2015, citing three articles from *The Fresno Bee*, three from the *Visalia Times-Delta*, and none from the *Valley Voice*.

This is strange because during Mr. Mathis' first year in office we were the only paper to consistently cover his press conferences, town hall meetings and speeches. Not only was the *Visalia Times-Delta* MIA for almost all of Mr. Mathis' events, but its editorial page listed former Assembly member Connie Conway as Visalia's representative in the Assembly fully six months into his term. The *Valley Voice's* excellent rapport with the Mathis camp disappeared with his staff, of which none of the originals remain.

Mysteries abound around this Assembly race concerning both candidates. At the end of my conversation with Mr. Acevedo I couldn't figure out if this guy was for real. What or who got Mr. Acevedo motivated to enter the race, and is he who he says he is?Should we ask for his tax identification number?Is he a plant to split the Hispanic vote in case another well known Hispanic joins the race? Are his intentions for running for office genuine?

And what about Mr. Mathis? Is he the man who showed up at the grand opening of the Democratic Central Committee's office with a proclamation declaring mutual support,or is he a Sharon Grove Conservative? Or is he just an opportunist?

Mr. Mathis no longerhas the winning team that ushered in his surprise victory in November of 2014, butI doubt he isgoing to need it. When voters get to the ballot box they are going to see a capital "I" indicating "Incumbent" next to Mr. Mathis'name. But after two conversations with Mr. Acevedo, I still haven't figured out what description will be next to his.

Looking back on 2015

I don't shy away from controversial issues when writing Political Fix. I don't get much feedback, either. But the letters I do get are well thought out, articulate, and virulently against my opinion. I have disagreements with some of my readers but I have never been blatantly wrong – until our December 3 issue.

While that issue was running off the presses the morning of December 2, Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik opened fire at a holiday party at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino. Fourteen people were killed and 22 injured. Farook, who was born in the US and was a county worker, was a radicalized American Muslim.

Call it bad luck or naiveté, but a blurb in my Political Fix column that day stated that the homegrown terrorist attacks that happened in Paris could never happen in the United States. The American Muslim population was better integrated into our culture and would not plan a terrorist attack.

Even if the mass shooting in San Bernardino had not happened that day my column still wasn't completely accurate. The 2009 Fort Hood shooter, Nidal Hasan, was an American Muslim who fatally shot 13 people and injured more than 30 others--although it was later determined that he was motivated more by his mental illness than Islamist extremism. Ironically, he was a psychiatrist. Then a vigilant reader emailed to say that the younger brother of the Boston Marathon bombers, Dzhokhar Tsarnaevwas an American citizen. He chose September 11, 2012 as his day for naturalization.

So my refrain, "That is why, when Americans are killed by terrorists, it's not by American Muslims" was not exactly true, and very badly timed.

It's still going to be a rarity for American Muslims to hate their country enough to plot a terrorist attack, but now we know it's possible.

A fellow writer forwarded me an article from an American Muslim woman who years ago was a journalist in San Bernardino. She was 22 years-old and fresh out of college when she called the managing editor of the city's paper of record, the *San Bernardino Sun*, to ask him for a job which she eventually landed.

She said, "the December 2nd shooting rampage hit too close to home. And that these perpetrators claimed to practice the same faith as mine makes it even more difficult.It is difficult because these are not the teachings with which I grew up. These are not the characteristics of a true Muslim. Their behavior was not that of someone with the heart and soul of a Muslim. Not my heart and soul.

It is difficult because the shooters had no loyalty, not even to their own child.

But I do. Muslims do."

Palmer Company Insurance
HOME • AUTO • FARM
COMMERCIAL • LIFE • HEALTH
(559) 562-2522 111 W. Honolulu, Lindsay
IBA WEST

Recycle this paper —
use it as an umbrella

Sierra Bancorp Announces Agreement to Acquire Coast Bancorp of San Luis Obispo County

Sierra Bancorp, the holding company of Bank of the Sierra, announced the signing of an agreement to acquire Coast Bancorp of San Luis Obispo.Under the agreement the outstanding shares of Coast Bancorp will be entitled to receive consideration of $3.2 million in cash and 581,753 shares of Sierra Bancorp common stock.

Coast Bancorp shareholders may elect to receive cash, Sierra Bancorp stock or a combination of both. As of January 4, the transaction would have a value of $13.8 million, or $2.37 per Coast Bancorp share.

Bank President and Chief Executive Officer Kevin McPhaill said, "We are excited that the employees and customers of Coast National Bank will join the Bank of the Sierra family. Expansion to California's central coast presents an exciting growth opportunity for Bank of the Sierra. Similar to Coast National Bank, Bank of the Sierra is committed to providing outstanding service coupled with a commitment to improving the communities in which they serve."

Anita Robinson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Coast Bancorp and Coast National bank stated, "Bank of the Sierra is the appropriate fit to continue the commitment by Coast National Bank for the past 18 years in our communities. Our customers will have access to many more products and services together with the additional benefit of a larger lending limit; enabling us to meet all of the needs of our customers and our community.

"This transaction benefits our shareholders who have been steadfast during difficult times and rewards them with shares in BSRR, providing opportunity into the future."

Sierra Bancorp expects the acquisition to be immediately accretive to earnings per share, and will yield a tangible book value earnback of less than 4 years and an IRR in excess of 20%.

McPhaill concluded, "This transaction is positive for our shareholders.The cash consideration allows us to leverage our existing capital and we believe this opportunity will enable us to further deploy capital via lending opportunities in San Luis Obispo and the surrounding communities."

Nordstrom

Continued from p. 1

Plaza Drive.

The site in Fresno is a 55-acre lot in the North Pointe Business Park, located along Highway 99 in the south end of town. Nordstrom's estimated cost of land and infrastructure in Visalia is $10.5 million, while the estimated cost in Fresno is $12.5 million.

Other advantages to locating in Visalia are the ambiance and pro-business atmosphere. Daniels says that he deals with millions of acres of industrial park land in California and that Visalia has been the most enjoyable to work with.

Councilman Greg Collins said that it is hard for site locators to put a dollar value on quality of life, vibrant downtown, arts scene, the many parks, and everything else that makes Visalia a great location. A representative from the Joann's Distribution Center spoke and said that while Nordstrom is a lot bigger, but because of Visalia's smooth permitting process, they had their building up and running within six months. That was 15 years ago and the process has gotten easier.

Visalia's Economic Development Manager Devon Jones, explained that another huge advantage is that Tulare County has more candidates per job opening than Fresno. Jones said, the Visalia/Porterville area is listed as in the Top 10 US Metro Areas for Logistics Labor, meaning that it has one of the biggest labor pools in the country. No other metro area in California was in the top ten.

Nordstrom has 77 stores in California, with more than half of them in the southern part of the state. That gives Visalia the advantage because it is one hour closer to Los Angeles than Fresno.

Lastly, Visalia set a lower threshold for when Nordstrom no longer receives incentives. If Nordstrom provides less than 700 jobs in Fresno no incentives will be paid. In Visalia that threshold is 500 jobs. The incentives given Nordstrom for locating to either location is $12,000 per fulltime job up to 875 jobs, then $10,000 for each fulltime job after that. The benefits received from hosting Nordstrom in property tax, sales tax, jobs and support businesses far outweighs the cost of the incentives.

Many city representatives were in attendance at the December 15 City Council meeting to voice their support for Visalia. Porterville City Manager John Lollis emphatically supported the project and joked that he wished the same discussion was happening during the Porterville City Council meeting. Scott Harness, vice mayor of Dinuba, said "rising tides lifts all boats" and that all of the cities are standing together and support getting the Nordstrom fulfillment center to Visalia. John Jansons, Farmersville city manager, applauded Visalia's efforts to bring this project into Tulare County.

All five Visalia City Council members voiced their support of the incentive package to get Nordstrom to Visalia. Councilmember Bob Link said that he believes that Visalia will receive far more sale's tax than what is projected because ordering on-line is the future.

"This is a high quality company and will send the message that Visalia is a good place to do business," he said.

Councilmember Warren Gubler said, "Visalia truly is the Jewel of the Valley with good people and a good work force."

He added that the Nordstrom's E-Center would be a nice magnet for the industrial park and show that Tulare County can host big projects like this better than other communities.

Mayor Steve Nelsen said that this is a win-win for the county.

"We have great companies in the Industrial Park," he said and added that they are in support of Nordstrom joining them.

Councilmember Amy Shuklian said that she was in full agreement with Collins about the quality of life in Visalia. She said that she lived in Fresno for 15 years and that's what drove her to relocate and settle in Visalia.

"I still have my Nordstrom card though," she said.

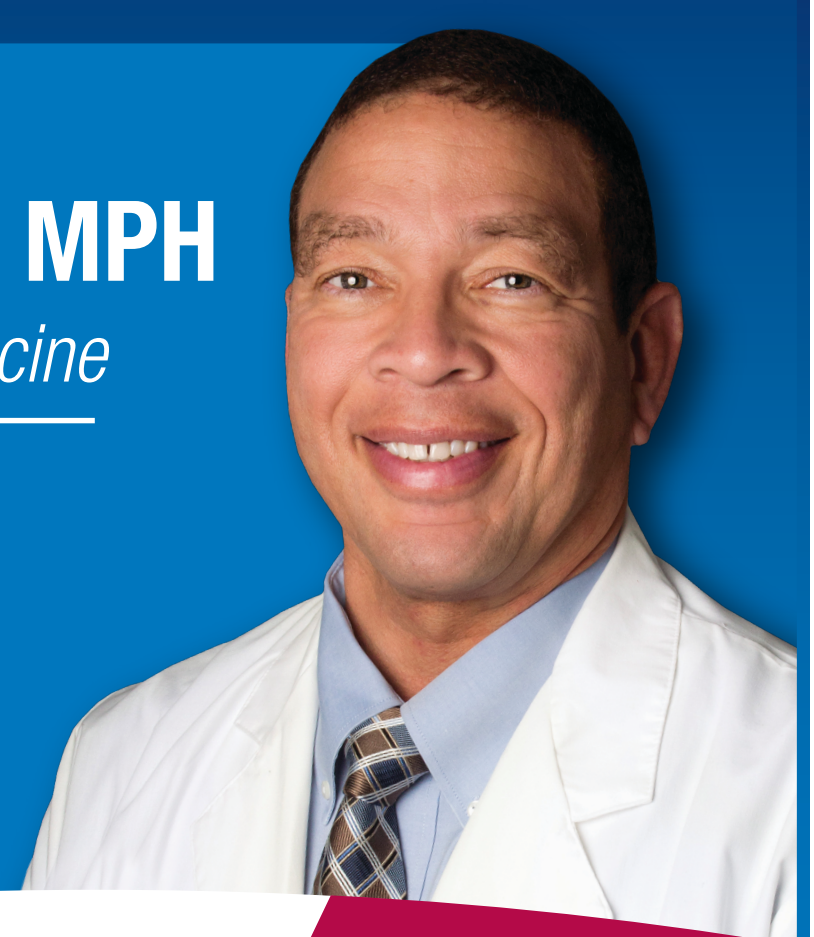
Newmark Grubb
Pearson Commercial
Happy New Year!
AVAILABLE:
Office Central Park
1,600±sq.ft. – 2,938±sq.ft.
Retail 12,310±sf Tulare
In Escrow
Retail 2,720± sq. ft.

2020 West Whitendale
$3,000 Gross
Industrial Lease 4,800±sq.ft
Industrial 62,764±sf
Strathmore $950,000
Land 2.17± acres Downtown
Visalia $1,050,000
Land Retail
4.72 acres Dinuba $750,000
Land Retail 4.18± acres Tulare
- Highway 99 $1,000,000
Land Ind Lots 21.20± acres
Tulare - $ Varies
Land Ind 17.5± acres Tulare -
Highway 99 $1,908,750
Land Ind 15.3± acres Shafter
$1,995,000
Land Ind 153± acres Visalia -
Plaza/Riggin $65,000/ac.
Ask for **Mike Porte,**
(559)972-2421 BRE# 01075873

Adventist Health Welcomes

James C. Dunn II, MD, MPH
Occupational Medicine

SPECIALTIES:
- Workplace Injury Care
- D.O.T. Physicals
- Jobsite evaluations
- Fit for Duty Evaluations & Follow-up Exams
- Medical Surveillance



In Hanford
500 N. Greenfield Ave.
559-537-1350
Fax 559-537-1352

In Reedley
936 G St, Ste B
559-391-3760
Fax 559-391-3762

Adventist Health
JobCare

For more information, visit www.AHCVNJobcare.com.

Agriculture

Commentary: Advocacy Pays Dividends for Farm Bureau Members

Josh Rolph, CFBF

Amid the challenges this year, California Farm Bureau Federation's federal advocacy efforts contributed greatly in achieving needed solutions for our farmers and ranchers. Whether it was seeking an end to the crippling port slowdown, finding relief from the drought, combating the new Clean Water Rule (also known as "WOTUS"), or successfully obtaining certainty for a long sought-after tax provision, we have been hard at work in Washington, D.C., coordinating our advocacy efforts with those of other agricultural organizations on behalf of California agriculture.

I've seen the grassroots come alive this year in the face of adversity and work towards truly making a difference. When there are many voices coming together to bring about change, we are most effective. At any point, one of those voices can rise up to resonate in just the right place at exactly the right time. Such was the case this year during the port slowdown.

The beginning of the year was marked by a growing agricultural export crisis fueled by a slowdown of operations at all West Coast ports triggered by a labor dispute that was worsening by the day. In January, Ag Alert®'s cover story featured an image of stacks of walnuts awaiting shipment overseas. The story chronicled how citrus, hay and many other commodities were quickly losing access to critical markets.

To respond to the crisis, we weighed in heavily with the California congressional delegation and Obama administration, sending stories from Ag Alert® as well as personal experiences from our membership to show how the dispute was harming our producers.

It was tough to gauge our effectiveness until a forum between U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman at AFBF's Annual Meeting in San Diego, when Imperial County member Ronnie Leimgruber rose from the audience to share how his business was negatively impacted by the slowdown. Secretary Vilsack was visibly moved by his story and promised action.

When the CFBF board of directors met with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative the following month, officials shared how important Mr. Leimgruber's interaction with Secretary Vilsack was in getting the attention of the administration. A few weeks later, the administration finally engaged in the negotiations, resulting in a deal between labor groups and the ports. As you can see, it can't be overstated the influence of grassroots advocacy and the potential impact one person can have on significant issues like these.

With the continuing drought, our legal team has been fully engaged in analyzing federal drought legislation, while we continue to urge Congress to put their differences aside and pass meaningful water legislation. While negotiations on legislation continue, we are actively encouraging the House and Senate to come together with a compromise to establish policy that looks to the long term by sending more water to the parched Central Valley during times of drought. With every passing day, the irreparable harm to our Central Valley economy, which is so dependent on agriculture, becomes more certain, due to the effects of drought and lack of water deliveries. Congress has the power to help alleviate the impacts of natural drought and it is imperative they do so. We will continue to coordinate our efforts along with others throughout agriculture to seek a workable legislative package early in next year's session.

When the WOTUS rule was released in June and finalized in August, we have considerably stepped up our efforts to educate members on the rule and to help combat the flawed regulation, which could potentially result in increased regulation for 95 percent of California's land mass. Despite a recent court injunction that puts the U.S. Enviromental Protection Agency's implementation of the rule on hold, we don't plan to slow down our efforts. We've held multiple webinars, created a dedicated Web page on the issue, asked our members to personally engage through FARM TEAM alerts and held local meetings with our elected representatives, in order to educate them about the over-reach of this very egregious rule.

We held a widely attended breakout session on WOTUS at our recent annual meeting. A panel that included a legal scholar, a biologist and San Joaquin Farm Bureau member Brad Goehring effectively spelled out the impacts the rule will have on private property rights. A recent ruling by the U.S. Government Accountability Office even criticized the U.S. EPA for breaking the law in their utilization of taxpayer funds in mounting a campaign against the Farm Bureau's Ditch the Rule campaign against WOTUS implementation.

Last week, we saw a major victory when a tax deal was signed into law that permanently extends two important tax provisions: Section 179 business expensing and Section 143 bonus depreciation (see story). These have been high priorities for Farm Bureau, as we have advocated year after year for them to be renewed until they could be made permanent. Like the previous examples I've shared, it was individual Farm Bureau members sharing their personal stories that made the difference and resulted in the provisions receiving a strong bipartisan majority in Congress.

We've also worked hand in glove with other commodity organizations and agricultural trade associations on such critical issues as the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, creating a national standard for labeling of genetically engineered foods, revisions to dietary guidelines on dairy and beef consumption, as well as increased funding to combat pests and disease, issues related to immigration reform and labor.

Again, it is FARM TEAM alerts, advocacy trips to Washington, congressional district meetings, letters, regulatory comments and, above all else, your personal stories that get the job done.

Many challenges lie ahead, which is why grassroots involvement is more important than ever. Your Farm Bureau membership is critical to successful advocacy to ensure the prosperity of California farmers and ranchers. Don't forget: The most effective advocate is you.

(Josh Rolph is manager of federal policy for the California Farm Bureau Federation. He may be reached at jrolph@cfbf.com.)

This article reprinted with the permission of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

'Cultivate California' Program Debuts with Website, Social Media

California Farm Bureau Federation

An outreach program describing how California farmers and ranchers use water efficiently to produce the food and farm products Californians depend on has debuted a website and social media feeds.

Under the theme "Cultivate California," the program includes social media messages on Twitter and Instagram, using @CultivateCA, and a website at www.cultivatecalifornia.com.

The program description on the Cultivate California website describes farmers and ranchers as "resilient and adaptive."

"They are committed to using smart, efficient, innovative, water-efficient and sustainable practices to grow the food and fiber that we need and love," the website says.

The website also features stories about individual farmers and ranchers who have instituted a variety of water-efficiency measures to produce food and farm products.

The program has concentrated on gaining insights about how Californians think about the water used to grow food and farm products, and on using those insights to build awareness about farmers' and ranchers' commitment to innovative and efficient farming practices, using every manner of production imaginable.

Research showed that an overwhelming majority of Californians appreciate the state's farming heritage and the farmers and ranchers who generate locally grown food and farm products.

The program encourages individual Californians to consider the importance of the state's agricultural production through the food they eat.

Cultivate California will promote the social media hashtag #CAonMyPlate and ask people to share how they personally experience food grown in California in their day-to-day lives.

A page on the website will feature images shared on social media using the hashtag.

The Cultivate California program is supported by individuals, cooperatives, companies, and organizations that represent California farmers and ranchers. Supporters include the California Farm Bureau Federation and 30 county Farm Bureaus, Western Growers, the California Farm Water Coalition, California Farm Credit and a number of commodity organizations and cooperatives.

A list of supporters is included on the Cultivate California website.

This article reprinted with the permission of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Agriculture

California Enters New Year with a Larger Snowpack

Kate Campbell, CFBF

With the Sierra Nevada snowpack standing at or above average going into what typically is the year's key period for precipitation, California farmers and ranchers are watching the skies and hoping for a dent in the state's multi-year drought. But memories of past winters that started strongly, then fizzled, leave farmers and water experts cautious.

When the state Department of Water Resources took the season's first manual survey of the snowpack last week, it found water content of the snow at the survey site had reached 136 percent of the long-term average. Snow sensors placed throughout the Sierra put the statewide water content at 105 percent.

Forecasts of additional storms in the first week of January brought further cause for optimism—especially in the wake of the bone-dry January of a year ago—but DWR Director Mark Cowin cautioned that another three or four months of surveys will be needed to indicate "whether the snowpack's runoff will be sufficient to replenish California's reservoirs by this summer."

For example, Lake Oroville in Butte County, the principal State Water Project reservoir, now holds about 47 percent of its historical average for the date. Lake Shasta north of Redding, the largest reservoir in the federal Central Valley Project, stands at about 50 percent of average storage, while San Luis Reservoir, a critical south-of-delta holding facility for both the SWP and CVP, remains at 30 percent of average.

State water officials said it will be difficult to rebuild those storage levels quickly.

In average years, the Sierra snowpack provides about 30 percent of California's water needs as it melts each summer.

"One thing that puts a smile on my face is looking east and seeing snow on the mountains," Kern County farmer Pete Belluomini said. "The last couple of years, we've been watching the snowpack and it was bleak, but now things are looking more positive."

Belluomini said farmers in his area have already heard from their local irrigation districts that, if the drought situation doesn't improve, they can expect less irrigation water in 2016.

"We're planning for the worst-case scenario and hoping it doesn't come to that," he said.

"Farmers have been forced to be thrifty and smart," Belluomini added. "They've figured out ways to save water and I hope will continue to use those conservation techniques and ideas as part of everyday life, not just life in an emergency. That's how our company thinks, and the drought offered lessons we've learned."

With the El Niño weather pattern offering the prospect of additional storms reaching California beginning this month, California Farm Bureau Federation Director of Water Resources Danny Merkley urged operators of state and federal water projects to take full advantage of storm flows.

"Any rainstorms that create flows in excess of what is necessary for the ecosystem, fish, delta water quality and vested water users must be diverted to surface storage and good groundwater recharge areas, rather than being allowed to flow into the Pacific Ocean," Merkley said.

The prospect of a rebuilding Sierra snowpack also underlines the need for California to update its "aging water infrastructure," he said, to capture flows in future wet years that can provide water to farms, cities and the environment during prolonged dry periods.

"Upper watershed management, new water storage facilities, groundwater recharge and being sure to operate facilities for today's weather conditions and environmental policies are all necessary tools in the 21st century," Merkley said.

Frank Gehrke of the state Department of Water Resources measures the snowpack at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada. Gehrke said the snowpack is "much better" than it was a year ago. Courtesy/California Department of Water Resources

Taking advantage of excess flows during times of plenty is also key to recharging groundwater basins, he noted.

In his area, Belluomini said, groundwater levels appear to be stabilizing.

"We seem to have found an equilibrium with our groundwater and we're cautiously optimistic about our water supply going into this year," he said.

Colusa County farmer John Garner, who chairs the CFBF Water Advisory Committee, said the drought should have taught California that the state must be "truly honest" about its water needs.

"Our current water storage capacity is not adequate to serve all of California, and that has been true for decades," he said. "I don't see that reality changing in the future—even with full reservoirs. We need water infrastructure that allows for more storage and flexibility in our water supply management system."

Merkley said the Proposition 1 water bond approved by California voters in November 2014 provides $2.7 billion in money for water storage, which he described as "a down payment" on needed development. He said Farm Bureau has been working with the California Water Commission on its Water Storage Investment Program, to identify projects that would have the largest impact on statewide water infrastructure.

Later this year, Merkley said, the Water Commission will finalize the regulations needed to allow competitive review of the projects submitted for funding.

"We will continue to urge the commission to move the process along as expeditiously as possible," he said.

Meanwhile, at Phillips Station in the Sierra, where DWR conducted its manual snow survey, survey chief Frank Gehrke said the snowpack is "much better" than it was last year at this time.

"If we believe the forecasts, then El Niño is supposed to kick in as we move through the rest of the winter," Gehrke said. "That will be critical when it comes to looking at reservoir storage."

(Kate Campbell is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at kcampbell@cfbf.com.)

This article reprinted with the permission of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Cooperation Among Farmers Will Be Essential for Future, Farm Leader Says

California Farm Bureau Federation

In responding to water shortages, forming new groundwater management agencies, and engaging in political advocacy, California farmers and ranchers must unite and cooperate as never before, according to California Farm Bureau Federation President Paul Wenger. Wenger spoke during the opening general session of the 97th CFBF Annual Meeting in Reno today.

The past year has been challenging, Wenger said, as lingering drought and water shortages placed additional focus on agricultural water use even as many farmers and ranchers—himself included—lost crops due to lack of available water.

Having recently returned from a trip to Australia, which reconfigured its water rights system as the result of a 13-year drought, he said farmers there found that once their water rights were separated from their land, "they had lost one of the greatest assets they had had." As a result, a significant amount of Australian farmland will be permanently fallowed.

"It didn't need to be," Wenger said, "and it certainly doesn't need to be here in California."

Wenger said the formation of local groundwater sustainability agencies in California will require farmers and ranchers to work together to ensure groundwater is managed appropriately.

"Put the pressure on the folks in your area to come together … to make sure they can control their groundwater effectively, locally," Wenger said.

With an election year coming that he said would be "hugely important," Wenger urged farmers and ranchers to make political action a part of their "everyday budget."

"If we will continue to work together, we will not just endure, but we will thrive," Wenger said.

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 53,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of more than 6.2 million Farm Bureau members.

This article reprinted with the permission of the California Farm Bureau Federation.

Come Home for the Holidays

Casa Grande

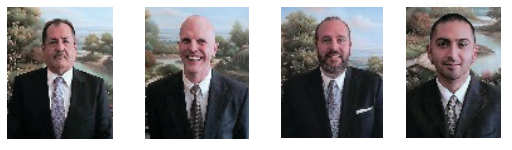
Senior Care Home & Assisted Living

www.casagrandeseniorcarehomes.com

347 E. Walnut, Visalia (559) 733-0233

Hadley-Marcom Funeral Chapel

"Dignified and Affordable Without Compromise"



John Alvarado Brad Miller Steven Marcom Sergio Cuevas

We're Part of Your Community.

1700 W. Caldwell Ave., Visalia

www.hadley-marcom.com

(559) 625-8900 FD 2129

Opinion: The *Valley Voice* Wraps up 2015

Catherine Doe

Valley Voice Wraps up 2015

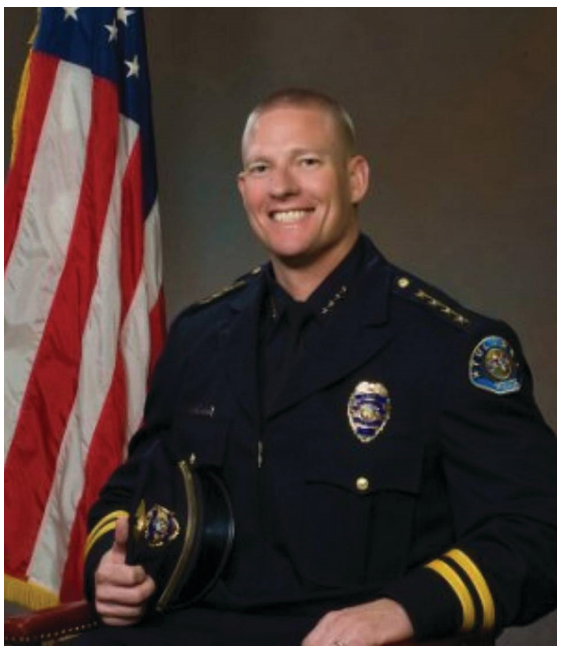
Reflecting on 2015's top stories brought about revelations concerning small towns, the importance of the media and why some people hate Facebook.

Our top three stories of the year came out of Tulare, Woodlake and Hanford, showing the pent up demand for small towns to get better media coverage. Hanford does have its own newspaper, the *Hanford Sentinel*, and while the reporter who has the same beat as I do is about as cuddly as a cactus, he does cover the town's biggest issues.

Tulare used to have the *Advance Register* but it was bought out by the *Visalia Times-Delta (VTD)*, and the *VTD* has a hard time covering their own city's big stories. If Tulare had had an independent paper, then Tulare Police Chief Jerry Breckinridge would have never gone "missing" and the Tulare Police Department would have thought twice about covering up his DUI. The *VTD* hasn't covered Visalia's big stories like Walmart's Super Center and the Nordstrom Fulfillment Center, and shouldn't pretend to adequately cover Tulare.

The *Valley Voice* misses important stories also, but we are not Gannett.

The *Valley Voice*'s most-read story



Former Tulare Police Chief Breckinridge. Courtesy/ City of Tulare

was about police brutality and mirrored what is happening nationally.

Beside terrorists' attacks, police brutality was the number one issue in the nation for 2015.

Jonathan Smith's beating by the Tulare Police Department (TPD) was read by more people than the *Valley Voice* has on-line readers, meaning the story spread beyond our borders.

Our article about the TPD also solidified why many people hate Facebook. When readers logged on to our website to read our paper they left, not always well-meaning, but well thought out and rational comments.

Conversely, the comments left on Facebook ranged from plain rude to plain stupid and were made by what seemed to be a group of first graders.

How was it that the Facebook users got their facts so wrong? After some head scratching I realized that while commenters on our webpage actually read the article, Facebook users just looked at the picture, *maybe* read the blurb, and then graced us with their pearls of wisdom.

The idiocy of some of their comments confirmed that habitual Facebook users have developed their own special kind of Attention Deficit Disorder.

Updates to Valley Voice's Biggest Stories of 2015

1. Tulare Man Claims Police Department Brutality

On the morning of August 25, Jonathan Smith left his quiet neighborhood to do some errands. Seventeen hours later, after a beating by several Tulare Police Officers, six hours in jail, and a visit to the hospital, he made it back home at 2:30am.

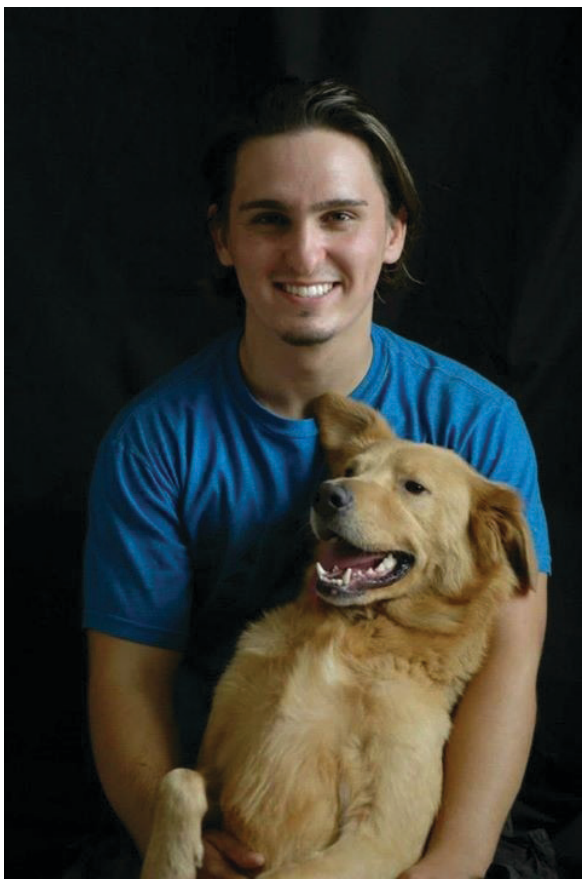
Smith's lawyers, Melo and Sarsfield have already started the process of filing a civil suit against the Tulare Police Department. Four months after the incident, Smith and his lawyers do not know the names of the police officers involved in the beating. Nor have Smith's two cell phones been returned. Smith recorded the incident on his cell phones and they were confiscated at the scene. Neither the Tulare Police Department nor the DA can watch the videos on his phones without a search warrant, which has not been issued.

Tulare County District Attorney has initiated a criminal case against Smith. After three months of deliberating, the DA decided to file charges against Smith for "Resist, Obstruct, Delay of Peace Officer or EMT."

Smith's lawyers, Melo and Sarsfield have stated that you can't criminally charge someone for resisting arrest if they are not being arrested for anything. Smith has been ordered to appear at the Tulare County Superior Court at 8:30am for arraignment on January 7.

2. Who Filled in Mussel Slough?

Stories about Hanford get a lot of hits, but it was still surprising the interest generated by an old neglected and abused waterway. When I asked a Hanford resident why an esoteric issue like Mussel Slough would be so popular with *Valley Voice* readers I was told that



Jonathan Smith and his dog Chizum. Courtesy/Jonathan Smith.

the *Hanford Sentinel* wouldn't do articles like that, meaning controversial. It's also because I doubt *Hanford Sentinel* reporters are paid for research and investigation time, of which this subject took a lot. Most people don't even know what a slough is, let alone want to read about it. They do in Hanford though, and the slough was a mainstay in the lives of the old folks in that town and they don't want to see it disappear.

At issue is when the residents are not looking another segment of Mussel Slough surreptitiously disappears. At a Hanford Planning Commission meeting one of the commissioners actually referred to the slough as that old dry canal. That old dry canal is the lifeblood of Hanford as the city's only source of water comes from its underground aquifer. Mussel Slough is a living sponge that absorbs and cleans the water that eventually reaches Hanford's water supply.

As for the canal that prominently passes through town? That water belongs to Mr. Boswell--so hands off, Hanford.

3. Sources Explain Tulare Chief Breckinridge's Absence

A weathered arbor at Mooney Grove Park. Valley Voice/Catherine Doe

After the Memorial Day Holiday, Tulare Police Chief Jerry Breckinridge went missing. The Tulare tax payers, who were paying more than $10,000 a month for their absent police chief, were none too happy with City of Tulare Manager Don Dorman's cavalier attitude. Dorman was refusing to give an explanation, saying this was a personnel issue, tax payer be damned.

On September 29 the *Valley Voice* revealed in an article that Breckinridge's disappearance was related to an unreported DUI and a domestic abuse case from 2014. The rumor was that Dorman went over to Breckinridge's house the day after his DUI incident and told him to leave town and go into rehab.

Perhaps as a result of the *Valley Voice's* story, Breckinridge resigned five days later, on October 6. His resignation came two hours before the Tulare City Council meeting. Strangely, nothing was mentioned at the meeting; two city council members were absent, and no media was present except for the *Valley Voice*. In closed session Dorman and the city council allowed Breckinridge to choose his own resignation day of November 13. It was speculated that Breckinridge picked the date to maximize his retirement package.

In a comment on the *Valley Voice*'s website, Vice-Mayor Carlton Jones said that, for his part, he believes that some or all of the allegations may be true, posting that, "As a citizen I think Jerry mad[e] a huge mistake and it's being swept under the rug I think other officers know the truth."

Jones continued in another post,

Top 10 Stories Based on Page Views:

1. Tulare Man Claims PD Brutality
2. Sources Explain Tulare Chief Breckinridge's Absence
3. Wrongful Termination Suit Filed Against Woodlake Officials
4. Visalia's Fourth of July Fireworks Show Cancelled
5. FPPC Complaint Filed Against Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux
6. Who Filled In Mussel Slough?
7. Disc Golf: Not Your Father's Frisbee Game
8. Judge Valeriano Saucedo's Last Hearing Takes Place in a San Diego Courtroom
9. Visalia Times-Delta Struggles to Keep Autonomy
10. Hanford's Mussel Slough Mystery Persists

"This act started with one person, Jerry. The first mistake is his. The next mistake is what happened when he was confronted by another officer. No I don't know what happened. I have no way of finding out. You should all ask Jerry. I will do the same."

The citizens would like to follow Jones' advice and "ask Jerry" but he is still missing.

Top 10 Stories Based on Facebook Views

1. Tulare Man Claims PD Brutality
2. Who Filled in Mussel Slough?
3. Sources Explain Tulare Chief Breckinridge's Absence
4. Public Speaks Out on Condition of Mooney Grove
5. Visalia City Council Supports Nordstrom
6. Hanford City Staff Locked up Park
7. Visalia Times Delta Struggles to Keep Autonomy
8. Tulare County Board of Supervisors Responds to Grand Jury Report on Mooney Grove
9. Breckinridge's Resignation
10. Wrongful Termination Suit Filed Against Woodlake Officials – Daniel Garibay

4. Public Speaks Out on Condition of Mooney Grove

Even with the media coverage, and citizens speaking out during public comment at the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS), park goers were never given an adequate reason for the deteriorating condition of Mooney Grove. While the Plaza Park Pond hosts a Winter Trout Derby on January 9 for the local kids, Mooney Grove's pond languishes in green goo. The TCBOS finally did respond to the outrage by forming the Parks Advisory Committee. The commission oversees all of Tulare County parks but Mooney Grove consumes most of their time.

After sitting through three meetings of two hours each, it was clear that the committee members were making decisions that any competent park manager should have already made. Through no fault of their own, the entire PAC process has been a huge waste of time. The TCBOS needs to show leadership in regards to Mooney Grove and Tulare County Parks and Recreation Manager Neil Pilegard, needs to be told to do his job. If that were happening the Park Advisory Committee would not be necessary.

5. Visalia City Council Supports Nordstrom

The biggest story in the Central Valley right now is the race between Visalia and Fresno to land Nordstrom's West Coast Distribution Center. It would bring 1,875 jobs to the region and establish the chosen city's industrial park as the place to be for big retail. An incentive package was discussed during the December 15 Visalia City Council meeting, when they matched Fresno's package dollar for dollar. A decision is expected from Nordstrom later this month. An update to our Facebook article posted mid-December can be found in this issue.

10. Food Freedom Initiative Filed with City

The fight over allowing chickens and miniature goats inside Visalia city limits was the most entertaining story in 2015. Supporters on both sides of the issue have very valid concerns but their passion bordered on crazy.

As I wrote in a Political Fix column, "Here in our office, for expediency's sake, we refer to each side as pro-goaters or anti-goaters, and both have made some pretty ridiculous statements. An anti-goater claimed that the Urban Farmers for Food Freedom (UFFF) is 'holding Visalia hostage' over the initiative process. A pro-goater said in referring to a city council public hearing on chickens, 'why open up this microphone to the people if you are dictators in your hearts?'"

The Urban Farmers Food Freedom initiative to legalize miniature goats and chickens has been collecting signatures since late summer. Though the *Valley Voice* has been enjoying their farm fresh eggs provided by Associate Editor Nancy Vigran , the *Valley Voice* does not endorse either side of the initiative.

A pro-goat rally at the Visalia Convention Center prior to a council meeting. Valley Voice/ Catherine Doe

According to Gingi Freeman, director of the UFFF, "We are in the process of withdrawing the initiative and submitting for refile in February to make the November ballot. We found formatting errors in our petition and if we submit the current petition, the city could fight us on it being valid. While we would most likely win the case, according to our lawyers, it would be a lot less time and money if we just refile."

Sheriff Boudreaux giving a press conference on ag theft. Valley Voice/Catherine Doe

A commercial building cuts through Mussel Slough in Hanford. Courtesy/Andy Mattos

No Move to Consider Acquiring Visalia Water System

Staff Reports

Despite the onslaught of mailers and web posts touting a "government takeover," the Visalia City Council remains firm that recent communication from Cal Water paints a picture of panic that is just not true.

"We haven't changed our minds, Visalia City Council is not considering acquiring the Visalia water system at this time," said Mayor Steve Nelsen. "It's disheartening to find out the community is being hit with this misleading information."

According to Cal Water, an appraisal is the first step in buying the water system.

The company claims that the city is merely postponing making an offer on the water system.

The Council requested an appraisal of the water system in November. Cal Water responded to the city's decision to appraise the Visalia District by requesting that council not consider acquiring the system and instead allow the company to focus on efforts to comply with drought-related conservation efforts.

Although the appraisal was already largely completed prior to Cal Water's request, the council has agreed that it will not review the appraisal or consider acquiring the system at this time.

Visalia did meet the state-mandated water conservation levels for November, thanks to citizen conservation and a little help from rainfall, but unfortunately it's the first time Cal Water has met the mandate in eight months.

"We need Cal Water to develop and implement a water conservation plan that demonstrably meets state water use reduction mandates on an on-going basis, not just in rainy months," said Nelsen. "If they really want to focus on drought actions, it's time for them to move away from the shock pieces that mislead our citizens."

Visalia residents pay a higher than average water bill compared to other communities in the Central Valley. But that may change. As city councils around the Valley have been reluctant to make the unpopular decision to raise rates and pay for repairsto their aging water infrastructure, they will soon be forced to. Hanford just raised their water rates by 89% starting January 1. Cal Water has kept Visalia's water system in good working condition, compared to other water systems in the area. Conversely, Visalians have paid the price.

Rural LISC and Pacific Western Bank Help Alleviate Drought Conditions in San Joaquin Valley

Pacific Western Bank and Rural LISC have announced a $1 million loan to Self-Help Enterprises as part of a collaborative effort to alleviate drought conditions in the San Joaquin Valley. Located in Visalia, Calif., Self-Help Enterprises (SHE) will use the funds to provide low- income residents with permanent solutions including low-interest loans to drill a deeper or new well.

The funds originated from a 2015 California Organized Investment Network (COIN) CDFI Tax Credit Program award from the California Department of Insurance to Pacific Western Bank in early December. Pacific Western Bank will partner with Rural LISC to utilize the COIN tax credits through a below market investment. SHE, a community development corporation (CDC), will receive the below market rate loan from Rural LISC to support its ongoing work to supply low-income families with safe drinking water in the drought-ravaged San Joaquin Valley.

"We are extremely grateful for the generous support and committed partnership of Pacific Western Bank," said Suzanne Anarde, Rural LISC Program Vice President. "Thanks to these resources, Rural LISC will be able to further its mission of creating healthy and vibrant rural communities."

This collaboration exemplifies the essential role of Rural LISC, a community development financial institution (CDFI), which worked to create the loan arrangement, and will continue to monitor and report on its impact in rural communities.

SHE has provided housing and community development services to low-income residents of the San Joaquin Valley for over 50 years. Serving eight counties in the Central Valley, where thousands of wells have run dry during the now four-year-old, record-breaking drought, SHE has been at the forefront of drought relief efforts helping numerous low-income families in rural communities with temporary emergency assistance in the form of bottled water deliveries; install 2,500 gallon tanks and water delivery; and provide permanent solutions such as hooking up households to nearby municipal water lines, or in some cases, drilling new wells.

To support this process, SHE has established the McAllister Fund that provides essential financial assistance to individuals and poor communities to address critical water needs.

"Because the cost for well replacement is expensive and affordable financing is not available, SHE will offer families below market rate loans, coupled with other grants to finance the drilling of new and deeper water wells," said Greg Sparks, Rural LISC Program Director. "With predictions of a wet winter ahead, there is a growing tendency to think that one year will solve the problem. But the work is not done. Water experts say that the root of much of the Valley's problems – depletion of the groundwater – could take decades to remedy."

So far this year, SHE has placed 861 temporary storage tanks and pumps into homes that are receiving regular water deliveries; replaced 55 domestic wells; coordinated bottled water deliveries to 987 families; and extended new water lines to 105 homes. Despite successes, critical gaps still remain – especially in resources that can pay for the replacement of existing wells where there is no other viable solution. Currently, 296 families are on a waiting list for new wells. Because of high demand for well drillers, the average cost of new domestic wells has risen to over $25,000 per well. Donations to further the efforts of Rural LISC and Self-Help Enterprises can be directed to: http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org

Nothing is more important than your family's health. Our comprehensive care helps every member of your family through every stage of life.

Call us today to schedule an appointment or visit us online.

FAMILY HEALTHCARE NETWORK
a california health+ center
Your Health. Our Mission.
877.960.3426 | fhcn.org

Accredited By The Joint Commission

SEQUOIA Crossing

New Year Close Out Sale!

$10,000 Buyer Incentive *

5061 W. Concord Ave.
$360,845

Move-in Ready!

2,254 Sq.Ft. - 4 Bed/2.5 Bath
3 car tandem garage
(Includes total upgrades of $35,345)

5011 W. Concord Ave.
$ 336,080

Under Construction

2,108 Sq.Ft. - 3 Bed/2.5 Bath
3 car garage
(Includes total upgrades of $29,580)

Only two lots left ! Make your reservation before they are sold out !

Southwest Visalia - GATED community - Highly energy efficient homes
Floor plans range from 1,671 sq.ft. - 2,684 sq.ft.

SUMMIT Homebuilders, Inc.

Models Open: 11 am - 5 pm daily
5224 W. Redding Ave. Visalia
(559) 741-9484
Email: info@mrgkw.com

Marketed by: Musgrove RealEstateGroup
License#01841795

* Buyer incentive is to be applied towards closing costs or upgrades & available for a limited time. Sequoia Crossing reserves the right to modify plans, specifications, colors, maps, pricing and financing without notice or obligation. Square footage is approximate. Prices effective 8/1/14. **Broker co-op $5,000** . Summit Homes Builders, Inc. License #961587.

Former Long-Time Grace Homes Employee Sues the Ministry

Catherine Doe

On December 18, Sherrie Kuns-Fehlman filed a complaint against her former employer, The Grace Homes. The charges are discrimination, harassment and retaliation resulting in termination.

Her suit claims that The Grace Homes, "Denied a work environment free of discrimination and/or retaliation" that ended in her losing her job. The complaint revolves around the actions of The Grace Homes' current chief financial officer, Phil Luna.

Complicating matters, The Grace Homes is a ministry started by Kuns-Fehlman parents. Her father Gale Kuns was,until recently, the CEO and Kuns-Fehlman, her siblings, and her daughter were all employed at various capacities, making for a legacy of three generations.

The Grace Homes was started in the 1980's by husband and wife team, Gale and Glenda Kuns. They were motivated to start a home for pregnant teen-age girls after witnessing a right-to-life rally. The participants of the rally were only interested in the fetus rather than what happened to the mother or the child after it was born. The Kuns decided to buy their first group home for $800 and started out with six pregnant girls.

At the ministry's height they had 11 homes with 85 beds, a foster center, and a boys' home. In 2014, the state paid them $3.2 million in compensation for taking care of the emotionally high-risk pregnant girls. Grace ministries was the only place in the state that was licensed and had the ability to deal with the emotional needs of sex-trafficked pregnant girls and other victims of sexual abuse. Kuns-Fehlman made this possible because she was a licensed forensic counselor among her many other social work capabilities.

Gale Kuns said that he and Luna attended the same church, Visalia First Assembly, and that Luna contacted him through Linked-In to ask for a job. Luna was in desperate straits as his unemployment had run out and he was unable to pay his mortgage. Luna was recommended by other leaders in their church so Kuns thought he would give Luna a chance. Luna had been the CFO of First Assembly and Kuns wanted to see if he would work out as CFO of Grace Homes, then Kuns could retire. Now looking back at it, Kuns feels like Luna could just smell the money after such a successful 2014, Kuns said.

Kuns-Fehlmans said that the sexual abuse started with his first walk through of the Ministries in January of 2015. Her complaint alleges that Luna inappropriately touched her on several occasions and created a generally hostile work environment. After a particularly bad incident she refused to ever return to the office if Luna were still there. She and her father allege that eight or nine female employees were also not comfortable working with Luna and went on stress leave. Some of the women were allegedly fired because of their complaints about him and one was pregnant.

Luna's responsibilities as CFO included creating budgets, being the benefits administrator and other administrative duties. Reports started coming back to Kuns that Luna was sleeping on the job and sometimes went to one of the group homes and fell asleep on the couch.

Melo and Sarsfield, Kuns-Fehlman's lawyers, said other female employees described Luna's behavior as "overall creepy."

By the May board of directors meeting, Luna still had not put together a budget for 2015 or started his other duties as CFO. Kuns also said he received complaints from employees that Luna and a female employee would go into his office, lock the door, draw the blinds and turn off the lights and not emerge for a lengthy period of time. Because of the alleged sexual harassment, sleeping on the job, and nothing to show for his five months of employment, Kuns fired Luna May 12. Kuns stated his case to the board of directors at the June 8 regular meeting.

As a result of firing Luna, The Grace Homes governing board held a special meeting June 29 and decided to completely remove Kuns from the ministry and replace him with Luna. They passed several resolutions stating not only was Kuns unjustified in firing Luna, but that Kuns had mismanaged the ministry and misappropriated funds. The resolutions also made clear that no employee will communicate with the Kuns family lest they lose their job. Luna was reinstated as CFO and all members of the Kuns family were banned from coming onto The Grace Homes premises.

The board had posted warning letters on the doors of the ministry that if Gale Kuns or any of his family tried to enter to call the police. Kuns said that, "I just got up one day from my office and never came back."

Kuns-Fehlman explained in her *Additional Complaint Details* against The Grace Homes that, "After becoming the agency head, Mr. Luna then caused me to be fired from my job of almost 30

years. I believe the firing was done in retaliation for my complaint. In addition to being fired, Mr. Luna and the agency tried to wrongfully evict me from my residence on both Sumter and Princeton Streets and tried to have me arrested for trespassing in my own home. Also, they withheld my pay. After complaining of the withholding of my pay to the Department of Industrial Relations I was fired on the day my complaint was successfully settled in my favor."

Kuns-Fehlman stated that six hours after she won her labor case she was fired.

The Grace Ministries Board Member Gives His Side

A current board of directors'member was willing to give his view of the facts if we did not publish his name. He said that Kuns was actually taken out of the ministry after a state investigation. He said the state took their time investigating and that the judge really came down on him. The judge ruled thatKuns could not have any involvement in running institutions such as The Grace Homes for three years.

The root of the problem was that The Grace Homes did not have the right permits for all the types of people they were helping. Now the state, county and city were nailing them for use of permit violations. He said that the ministry is supported by the state for each pregnant girl they take care of but now, because of the permit violations, they can't take in those girls.

"It's like Ring around the Rosie," he said.

According to Kuns. the ministry is on the verge of losing their accreditation this March and acknowledged that permitting problems started in December, 2014, when he was still at the helm. Kuns said that Luna's leadership has made things worse. Kuns also pointed out the inappropriateness of putting someone in charge of an abused girls' home who has been accused of sexual abuse himself.

The board member countered by saying that now he believes that from the beginning Kuns wasn't following the original use permit. The original use permit was only for taking care of pregnant girls. The ministry rescued all kinds of girls then also started helping boys but apparently never got the appropriate permits to do so.

"The whole problem is that Kuns was held in high esteem and never questioned. Then the state took him out of the Ministry because of all of the things he did. I always told the board that I wanted an investigative reporter to research all this and bring it out into the open," said the board member.

The board member lamented that instead of helping The Grace Homes succeed, that everywhere the ministry turned, no one would help. The sad part, he said, is that The Grace Homes is the only facility in the state that takes sexually traumatized and sex-trafficked pregnant girls.

"You'd think they would be helping us to keep the ministry going, not shutting us down," he said."We just haven't had anyone on our side."

Both the board member and Kuns agree that the Ministry is out of money and that it is on the verge of getting its license revoked. The Grace Homes is down to 20 girls and four babies.

The board member said with an attitude of resignation, "my prayer and hope is that we will be able to fix it."

As far as the allegations against Luna, the board member felt that they were all fraud. His opinion of Luna was that he was a man of high moral character and that he was doing everything he could to keep the ministry going. The board member knows Luna and said he did not believe Kuns-Fehlman's nor the other women's allegations. The board member said that there were a lot of holes in Kuns-Fehlman's story and that Luna was not even there at the time of some of the alleged incidents.

"I don't think her case will go anywhere," he said. It's just one more stick in the spokes of the wheel to bring down the ministry."

The *Valley Voice* will be doing a series of articles on this situation as the facts reveal themselves and the court case proceeds. In a phone interview, Luna said he was unaware of a suit filed by Kuns-Fehlman, and doubted a current board member spoke to this reporter. Luna will be giving his side of the story in a follow-up article, after he has a chance to read Kuns-Fehlman's suit.

VECC

Continued from p. 1

construction of the VECC building, Visalia is selling bonds. The city council voted that the cost of construction and interest not exceed $22 million. Because of Visalia's A+ bond rating, which translates into lower interest rates, the total cost will be $17 million.

The VECC will be constructed in the general area of School Avenue and Burke Street. Extensive road improvements to Burke, Oak and School Streets needs to be finished before the VECC opens its doors. Efforts to coordinate road improvements with building construction have been successful except for Oak Street. The city's improvements to Oak Street will make it harder for the railroad company to make repairs to its rails. The railroad has suggested that Visalia pay for new, longer lasting tracks so repairs to the line will be infrequent. Visalia staff is in negotiations with the railroad becausethey don't feel that the city should pay the tab for railroad improvements.

Mayor Steve Nelsen felt that the completion of the VECC building was being held hostage by the railroad company. Suggestions were made to work over and around the railroad, but Nick Macia, the city's community development director, said that significant improvements would still need to be made at the intersection of Tipton and Burke, where the railroad would have a crossing. As part of the connectivity plan and road improvements Oak and School Streets will be extended from Tipton Street to Burke Street.

Visalia city staff is working to schedule a groundbreaking ceremony to initiate start of construction for the VECC sometime in late January. The groundbreaking will be sponsored by the Police Department and Fire Department Administration, with coordination and assistance from the contractor, who will be supplying a commemorative sign.

Traver

Continued from p. 1

adding a County transit stop in this location, building a stormwater drainage system to serve the bus stop, and also the creation of an asphalt pathway to link the school to a new crosswalk that links to Merritt Drive, Traver's main thoroughfare," Coyne said.

These projects were funded with Measure R and county funds.

In December, 2015, decisions on a new sewer system for the community were made.

"Tulare County awarded a $1.5 million Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to fund design and construction of a new force-main sanitary sewer and lift station to convey wastewater to the nearby county-owned wastewater treatment facility," Coyne said.

"County officials also pledged additional County economic development funds to fully develop the project. Design work will begin in early 2016, with construction expected to be completed in early 2017," he added."The sewer expansion should allow for significant future growth within the Traver community and lead to more business expansion."

And growth is coming.

The new sewer system has prompted Self-Help Enterprises to take another look at the community for a housing project.

"We had looked at Traver more than 10 years ago," said Self-Help President & CEO Tom Collishaw, "but the lack of sewer put the project on the shelf."

The new sewer system project allowed Self-Help to dust the idea off again.

In fact, county officials called in Self-Help to serve as a catalyst for the CDBG grant, and it worked.

Self-Help has designed an 11-house development, which should begin construction in March or April, Collishaw said.

Self-Help is a non-profit agency that works with potential first-home owners. Those approved will actually help build all of the homes in the development, dedicating 40-hours per week from each homeowner family until the entire development is completed, as down payment toward their home, Collishaw said.

Some professional subcontracting is utilized for the homes, he said, but the majority of the building, under supervision of a Self-Help supervisor, is done by the residents. Once all homes are complete, the residents may begin to move in.

"The Self-Help homes represent more than $1 million-worth of construction activity, and will range in size from about 1205 square-feet for three-bedroom, two-bathroom plans, to about 1360 square-feet for four-bedroom, two-bathroom plans," Coyne said."This housing tract will also result in substantial sidewalk improvements along one side of Jacobs Drive."

Along with new homes, and county road, sidewalk and sewer improvements, also comes a new health clinic.

Family Healthcare Network (FHCN) began working with the Traver Joint School District to help respond to the community's need for local health care about two years ago, said Kerry Hydash, FHCN president and CEO.

A Health Resources and Services AdministrationNew Access Point grant allowed FCHN to move forward with development of a 3,700 square-foot health center on a corner of the Traver Elementary School property.

With notification of the grant in August came a rush to get the site built and operational within 120 days, as a requirement of the grant, Hydash said.

Because of early planning for the center, FHCN was able to get this done with the clinic opening with limited hours in December, and expanding to regular full-time hours soon. While the clinic sits on school grounds, it provides care for all age groups and any residents in the area.

"The school is such an important part of that community," Hydash said.

It makes the location a perfect fit, she said.

Working with Self-Help and the county has made for a good partnership, she added.

The basic needs "of shelter, food and transportation" must be met, Hydash said. "People can't concentrate on their health if they have other pressing issues."

Local residents' health issues will be met, she said, regardless of their ability to pay. FHCN honors most types of insurance and provides healthcare on a sliding scale for payment.

Traver Elementary School students received a much safer bus stop. At top: the stop before improvements. Above: the stop after improvements. Courtesy/Tulare County

With the sewer improvements and additions, Traver has the ability to grow from 700 to 7,000, Coyne said.

In addition, in October of last year, a $1,790,000 grant was awarded from Caltrans as part of the Active Transportation program. This allows for Jacob Street improvements along with widening and a concrete sidewalk with curb and gutter on the south side of the Jacob Street. Asphalt paveouts, bike lane, drainage facilities, ADA Ramps, signs and markings will also be installed, Coyne said.

Plans have also been made and will be presented at the January 26 Board of Supervisors meeting for sidewalk development from the bus stop to the clinic, which will include curbing and gutters, Coyne said.

"We have really embraced the community of Traver," he said. "Residents were very skeptical of the county, feeling that it wouldn't come through.

"Now they're really positive. You came through, you really did it."

There are approximately 90 communities within the county in similar circumstances to Traver, he said.

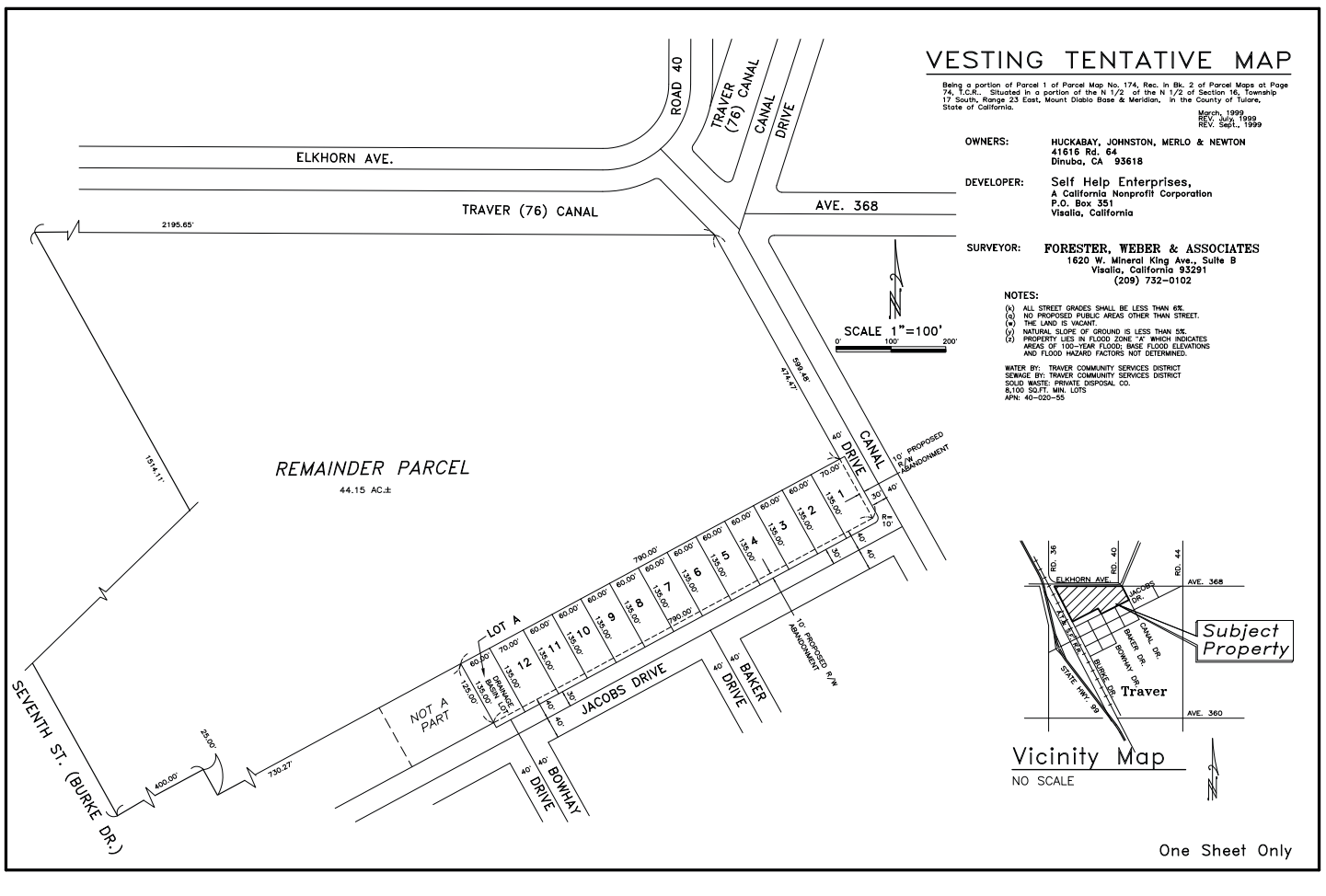
"We would like to do this in every community," Coyne said.

Some of that is already taking place. The county adopted plans for six more communities within the last 12 months.

"This is unprecedented," Coyne said.

For anyone interested in the Self-Help Homes, visit its website at www.selfhelpenterprises.org or call, (559) 651-1000.

Self-Help has found that developments of 10-12 homes works well. It has built 1,840 new homes in Tulare County and 460 new homes in Kings County with a total of 6,100 homes in the Valley since its inception, 50 years ago.



Future site of the Traver Self-Help Development.. Courtesy/Tulare County

Voices of the Valley

Dr. Larry Stoneburner

Jan M. Krafve

If you've been to one or more of the many civic or community events that go on each year in Tulare County, then you will probably recognize this man. He is often seen setting up a sponsorship table for a chamber dinner or one of the people handing out free books from a booth at business-to-business conferences.

Maybe you saw him late on a Friday afternoon, lugging the heavy equipment needed to broadcast local High School football games. Perhaps you recall that smiling face, glistening with rainwater from behind the wheel of a volunteer cart during the week of Ag-Expo. Most likely, you even took a second look at him when the occasion called for formal attire, since he usually wears a traditional Scottish kilt in recognition of his family heritage.

He often moves at the speed of light, rushing around like the white rabbit in "Alice in Wonderland." He is a man with a mission, actually, many missions. There just are not enough hours in the day to do everything he'd like to do.

He could get so much more done if there were 28 hours instead of 24. That would take care of the drive time required to get from his home in Springville to the many meetings he attends all the way across the county. The real question is, as the dynamic energy force he creates passes quickly by, were you able to catch the writing on the nametag he puts on each morning? If so, you would have read the name, Larry Stoneburner.

Larry Stoneburner (most people just call him "Doc") is one of those dedicated community volunteers who make the South Valley so special. When interviewing him for this article, it soon became apparent that he devotes the majority of his time to enriching lives of other citizens in Tulare County.

He holds a multitude of titles within local organizations including:

- Education Advocate for the Academy Academic Model - which fosters entrepreneurship skills with alumni as mentors and providers for students and initiates and develops a critical-thinking work experience program
- Tulare County Farm Bureau Advisory Board-Chair Rural Health & Safety and an active committee member on education, membership, land use, water, and scholarship fundraising
- Co-Chair #748 North Central Valley CA and #761 South Central Valley at CAAAN (Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network)
- President of the Southern Central Valley of California Cornell Club, which includes the counties of Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern
- Volunteer Advisory Board Member, Harmony Magnet Academy of Engineering and Performing Arts
- CEO, Director of Community Relations, Relationship Facilitator of Community Outreach at KTIP Radio – AM 1450
- Veteran of Foreign Wars Life Member

Here are more organizations he was involved with in the past:

- Advisory Board Member at Environmental Science Academy of the Porterville Unified School District as a "mission specific" Academy on the campus of Monache High School. With support of Linked Learning, ConnectEd, and the Irvine Foundation, focused learning and skill development in environmental science.
- Board Member for the Creative Center Foundation
- Board Member on the Advisory Board, Dept. of Agriculture, College of Sequoias
- Springville Rotary Club member
- Noon Rotary Club of Porterville member

In addition, he currently is involved with the Tulare, Visalia, Exeter and Porterville Chambers of Commerce.

After learning of the amount of organizations he has become part of since becoming a Tulare County resident, he was asked to describe what motivates him to give so much of himself.

He immediately responded, "I have lead a blessed and productive life. At any time in our life we may be faced with challenges and adversity. When that occurs we are forced to make a series of choices. You have to pick a path. There's no option but to do something, you can't remain immobile. I've somehow made the choices that have brought about more successes in my life."

He went on to further explain his philosophy on success.

"Everyone measures success by different criteria. My wife, Mimi, and I don't place money and the acquisition of material things to be the 'currency' of our success. We both believe that our success lies in assisting others around us to become successful within their own path. We base our success in seeing other people succeed. My biggest success was choosing her as my life-mate. I've been truly blessed by being able to work along side of her during all 43 years of our marriage. My very favorite pronouns are 'we, us, and ours.'

He leaned across the table with that youthful, "Doc" smile, and asked, "Do you want to know something funny? For the first 30 years that we were together, she was known as the wife of Dr. Stoneburner. However, for the last 13 years, I'm known as the husband of the famous Mimi! "

Dr. Larry Stoneburner. Courtesy/Larry Stoneburner

Due to complications which were incurred during a five-vessel-bypass heart surgery, Doc sustained permanent injury to his left hand. It left him with a lack of feeling in his fingertips, rendering him unable to perform the intricate procedures required of him to be an OB-GYN surgeon.

The Stoneburners had acquired ownership of KTIP Radio, a local news/talk station in Porterville. It was her dream to have a venue that would allow her further explore career in media broadcasting.

For more than a decade, the couple produced three medical segments a week that aired on a local television station. Both of their sons had finished college and left home, so he retired from his well-established medical practice in Bakersfield and headed for the hills. Actually it was the foothills, of Springville.

As he began to discuss his past, he made it clear why education plays the major role in the choices he makes with his time today.

"I was born in Coshocton, Ohio in 1941. In those days, the role models for me were doctors, teachers and pastors. After high school, I was able to attend Cornell University in upstate New York for two years and was studying engineering. My father became ill, so I returned home and got my Bachelor of Arts in psychology at Ohio State University.

"From there I transferred to George Washington's School of Medicine and Health Sciences. That's where I got my Doctorate in Medicine. During my internship, we worked 36 hours on and 36 hours off. Being tired was no reason to make mistakes. I tell students today that anyone can make a mistake. You just shouldn't make the same one over and over again.

"I had planned on furthering my education, but Uncle Sam had other plans for me, and in 1968 I was drafted into the Navy and went off to the Vietnam War. Instantly I had gone from a lowly intern to being responsible for 53 corpsman.

"I learned a lot about leadership while in the service. A good leader is someone who is willing to listen, and someone who is an advocate for the wellness and the goodness of those who work for you. Good leadership is really working together. It's a combination of book learning and life learning. After I left the military, I was ready to continue my studies in medicine, so I attended the Naval Hospital in San Diego where I became Board Certified as an OB-GYN."

Then he turned the conversation back to the subject of "choices."

"When faced with decisions about our future, our purpose, it is important to know what you're passionate about. You can be passionate about many things in life, but you need purpose to direct it.

"I tell my students that passion with a purpose, combined with innovation and creativity is what sets up current and future success in this life. As a recruiter for Cornell University, I've had the privilege of helping many young adults make wise decisions about where to continue their education. If you've earned the right to qualify for a top-tier university, you should not be denied entrance due to lack of funds. I believe we should help our kids go to the best schools on someone else's money. It's my job to make that happen. "

Larry Stoneburner describes himself as an "all-in" guy.

"If I say I'll do it, I do it. The problem is that in order to do something new in my life, I have to give up something old. I have to evaluate where I can be most effective.

"Every day I wake up knowing I have an opportunity for new communication, for new relationships, to connect people with one another. Each day I have just completed another step, another success. I am a relationship facilitator. I help direct people to others to expand their purpose and build success."

> *"A good leader is someone who is willing to listen, and someone who is an advocate for the wellness and the goodness of those who work for you. Good leadership is really working together. It's a combination of book learning and life learning."*
>
> Larry Stoneburner

Know someone you think should be featured? Email us: editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

Viewpoint

Critical Thinking for 2016

Ruben Macareno

So many people committed to New Year resolutions and some are still considering some self-improvement resolutions. Perhaps "Critical thinking and civic engagement" should be in the mix of consideration; A resolution that would improve self, family and community.

2016 is going to be filled with many running for office and they be will asking for your vote. There are many running for President whose positions range from establishment, anti-establishment, democratic socialist, ultra-conservative, moderate to progressive beliefs.

These days partisan lines have become so deep that those who do vote usually vote by party affiliation and not the individual's platform who perhaps would best serve the constituency. That is of course if you vote. In the 2014 primary and general election many Tulare County voters stayed home.

The US Census Bureau estimates that Tulare County's population in 2014 was 458,000 of which 133,000 are voters and of them in the last election just over 43,000, or 30% plus, voted in the primary and 63,000, or 46%, in the general election. So in the last primary election less than 10% of residents, one in ten, voted in a slew of candidates into office for the rest of the 458,000 and just a little more voted in the Nov. 2014 election.

Lack of true representation should be a concern for all residents. However the county's Latino community should have a greater concern where it accounts for 63% of the county's populous.

Lack of county Latino political/civic engagement and voting has its results. Not one Latino serves on the County Board of Supervisors or has a representative in the State Assembly, State Senate or the US Congress. Many Latinos mistakenly believe that Congressman Devin Nunes--who is of Portuguese decent--supports issues that benefit them in general. His surname is widely confused with the Spanish surname Nunez.

As important as the issue of a "diluted" or "lack of representation" is, what is more important is the need to zero into the issues that have not been addressed by our elected officials. All voters should have an educated conclusion when voting for the candidate who can and will do the job that is essential to the betterment of the community.

There are those who stand by the local status quo and believe all is well. Some leaders have said we like it just the way it is and we want no change. However statistics tells another story.

The Census Bureau reports that in 2014 Tulare County households earn under $43,000 a year and 26% live below the poverty level. Quality of life and personal economic growth has eluded those who have lived in long term poverty. Contributing to this is the fact that only 13% have any kind of a college degree. A study by WebHub.com reports that the county (Visalia-Tulare-Porterville metropolitan area) ranks 149th of 150 in education.

Jobs are a consistent problem. The county lags behind the state and nation in employment percentages. The State Employment Development Department reports that the county's unemployment rate last month was 11%, while the statewide rate is 5.7% and 4.8% nationwide. Residents feel finding good paying jobs to support their families are scarce and the local economy in general has been stagnant at best.

Area health lacks as well. Lack of, and turnover of, doctors to accommodate patients' needs is an issue. Many in the county are seen by Physician Assistants rather than a primary care doctor. Of the Robert Wood Foundation rankings of 57 counties Tulare County ranks 56 in Health Factors that categorize Health Behaviors, Clinical Care, Social and Economic Factors and Physical Environment in its ranking.

There is a need for additional resources for youth programs such as for at-risk youth, technology and employment training, recreation and teen pregnancy prevention. Kidsdata.org, a report listed in Tulare County 's Health and Human Services website, cites the county numbers and it teen pregnancy numbers are among the top five in California at 43.5 per 1000.

Many argue that nothing has change locally despite an economic spike throughout the state and country and that leadership is very slow at getting other important things done such as finding solid solutions for clean water, air and resurfacing rural roads.

Obviously there is a need for elected officials who will voice these and other concerns at the state and federal level. Perhaps this is where true stagnation exists.

Conversations with family, friends and colleagues about the national, regional and local issues and candidates are a great way to come up to speed with candidates and their platforms. Tuning into media, attending meetings, forums, and reading campaigns literature is beneficial as well.

Learning an incumbents' voting record and their response or lack of response to issues that matter to you; for the challengers and others a well thought out critique if they are the person who can bring change to address the prevailing issues that plague our country, county and/or community. Evaluate the candidates based on his or her ability, commitment, networks and resources.

This year's national election signifies a crossroads of sorts. Some believe we are at a fork. Where do we want to go as a country? How can we make a difference locally? No better way than to vote. However, voting is not a partisan exercise but one based on understanding the issues and needs and that requires critical thinking and civic engagement.

Happy New Year!

Ruben Macareno is the Chairman of the Tulare County Democratic Party

If Mental Illness Is the Problem, America Is Mentally Ill

Dave Ragland with Matt Meyer and Natalie Jeffers

2015 was a year of exceptionally overt police violence against black folk and tragic mass shootings. A common response to these events has been that they are the result of "sick" individuals. Many conservatives have suggested that the shooters were mentally ill: that the problem was a proliferation of bad people, not a proliferation of guns. When, however, the murderers happen to be people "of color," the narrative often changes to one of terrorism and extremism (though the NRA position remains consistently pro-gun, even defending the rights of the San Bernadino terrorists to acquire their weaponry).

In fact, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services, just three-five percent of violent acts are attributable to mental illness. And in fact, police have frequently simply treated nonviolent mental illness as a capital offense requiring instant lethal force.

But what about inciting people to violence? We should not fail to recognize the systemic interplay between race, class, NRA lobbying, and gun-related deaths. The myth of black criminality is conveniently used to replace an institutional analysis of what is wrong with our country.

These myths, both for police and for the majority of Americans, justify summary executions, the refusal of police to acknowledge the wrong-doings of fellow officers, and the courts' general unwillingness to hold individual officers accountable, opting instead to prop up a system of cover-up, delay, and denial. The rare exceptions boldly highlight the rule.

America is literally violently ill. This society is feverish on the valorization of violence. Victims of violence – speaking out and demanding accountability for racism (such as in Charleston or Ferguson), or regarding violent sexism (as in Planned Parenthood) – are blamed as the cause. This 'blame culture' is a symptom of America's frankly sick relationship to violence.

In order for healing to occur, we must trace our disease back to its sources, which include: The slave-owning colonies that revolted against the British created a "democracy" for whites only. Since America's founding, whites have used widespread violence against blacks, indigenous populations, and women to gain free labor and land.

Civil Rights law professor Michelle Alexander chronicles the continuation of slavery from slave patrols to our current prison system, which disproportionately incarcerates Blacks and Latinos. It seems our denial of the past leads us to denial of the present crisis.

Without facing our shared history frankly, including greater attempts to make amends, we cannot expect anything different from our future. To be clear, the authors do not support any violence. Having said that, history shows that, for example, Black Panthers who invoked their Second Amendment right to bear arms faced extraordinary, illegal, state-sponsored repression while armed white vigilantes were allowed to carry assault weapons at Ferguson protests. Why the double standard? Is it possible that guns in public places are always in the wrong hands?

It is no coincidence that this year of violence and fear was also marked by a huge increase in gun sales, stoked by politicians who suggest that survival of the American status quo is dependent on being armed against black, brown, immigrant, Muslim, and other "categories" that engender fear from impressionable white Americans. Yes, caution is important, but if we went by the statistics, perhaps we would disband all sports, or emasculate all men—they are the rapists and molesters of little girls, after all. But in America, we value each individual—we don't judge them by what "race," religion, class or other category into which they were born.

While many Americans try to protect some tiny bit of existential comfort gained in part from injustice, countless others are humiliated, discriminated against, jailed and killed through violent policing and the consequences of being born the wrong race and class. We are all, however, born into a systemic culture of silence and denial, trained to overlook how – from the beginning – militarization has mixed with money and racial matters to build this world-class empire.

America is ill, and the cause is the ingrained violence that comes from racism, materialism, sexism, economic injustice and beyond. We must, as a nation, cure this illness before it becomes terminal. In Dr. Martin Luther King's 1967 speech, he urged that America needed "a radical revolution of values" – exhorting us to move toward a "person-oriented" society rather than being "thing-oriented." The radical truth-telling coming from Ferguson offers a remedy for the rest of this nation. Transparency, accountability and confronting the powers that be (and our own neighbors as well when needed) is, as Intercultural Communications scholar Imani Scott suggests, our only real hope for peaceful survival.

We must ask ourselves at this moment in history, what kind of nation are we to become? Will we continue to choose money and profit instead of the lives of many of its citizens? When we are told that it is 'reasonable' to shoot and kill a 12-year-old children like Tamir Rice holding a toy gun in a park, when we face a consistent string of non-indictments of police officers engaged in racially motivated violence, when Congress refuses to end the ban on research of mass shootings, it seems that a resounding "yes" is our sad answer.

If we cannot and do not speak the truth telling about today's crimes against humanity, then the U.S. will not head towards a long and much-needed march towards recovery, healing, and true democracy. May 2016 open our hearts to the best of who we are and can be together.

Dr. David Ragland is from North St. Louis, MO, writes for PeaceVoice, and is a Professor of Education at Juniata College. Natalie Jeffers is an educator, activist and the Founder/ Director of Matters of the Earth. Matt Meyer is an educator, author, and co-founder of the Peace and Justice Studies Association.

Comments & Letters

"Humane for the feral cats means that the park will remain inhumane for the native wildlife that belongs there – cats do not belong in the wild. Rabbits, birds, chipmunks, squirrels, lizards and other critters suffer when feral cats are permitted to stay. Trap and neuter them, yes, but don't return – instead employ TENVAC (trap, evalute, neuter, vaccinate, adopt, contain) – keep the cats in enclosed shelters, not on public property.

Feral cat colonies pose a health risk. Their droppings can contain toxoplasmosis, which has infected all manner of wildlife, including white tailed deer. Since the volunteers are attached to the cats, maybe they could take the next step – adopt some, find homes for more, and get them into enclosed areas so they will be safe from coyotes, dogs, cars, etc. TNR success is a myth, pushed by people who 'love' cats but not enough to take the next step to safe enclosure, which is truly best for people, parks, wildlife, etc."

— E See on Parks Advisory Committee Hears Presentation on TNR

"I would suggest that a good start in Chief Hensley's quest for community outreach would be to make the community more welcomed at the Police Station itself. When one enters Tulare's police station you are not met by a human being. It is a small dark closed off room and one must speak through a wall phone to an unseen person on the other side of the closed off wall. This furthers the belief that the police is afraid for their own safety in the community….it is safe enough for we the people but not safe enough for the police thus promoting an "us against them" mentality to thrive among the ranks. If you want to have a greater presence in the community then a good place to start would be at the very hub of interaction between the police dept. and citizens (like it used to be years ago). Used to be that if there was a problem then one would go to the police station to seek help but when you can't even physically see a police officer in that building why would one ever think about turning to them for assistance. Need to speak to a policeman then place a phone call and wait hours for one to actually show up at your home. That place now says we need to protect ourselves against the community because they are all out to get us. How sad!"

— Barbara on Hensley Begins Permanent Position as Tulare Police Chief

"I am continually disappointed by the one sided, and slanderous coverage of this issue in regards to the Tulare County Museum. Amy King couldn't be further from the person described in these articles. I had the pleasure of working under Amy as a museum assistant and saw first hand her care and dedication to her job. She works tirelessly to preserve and promote the history of Tulare County in a many times thankless position. She works well over 40 hours a week, weekends, attends school outings, professional development and is constantly striving, on a very small budget with little to no staff, to provide the public with an incredible museum.

Amy is an animal lover and would NEVER kill a cat, kittens, etc. as this article states. Amy is a public servant and is working in a museum. She has standards to uphold to protect the collection entrusted in her care. It is not within her job capacity to address what is to be done with a feral cat population, only to enforce that a museum is not a place for animals. I witnessed first hand the destruction on the historic homes and textiles housed within the museum gates that these animals have caused. For the museum, it is not an issue of catch and release, spay and neuter, etc. it is simply that feral (or tame for that matter) animals do not belong on museum property.

Amy works so hard for the museum and it is incredibly disappointing to see the Valley Voice post article after article slamming her when there is never any mention of the amazing work she does. She gives tours to over 1,000 students a year in the museum. She hosts new exhibit unveilings, speaks at service clubs, volunteers her time helping veterans catalog their collections and archives. None of this is ever mentioned, only one sided false claims that cannot be verified."

— Lisa on Parks Advisory Committee Hears Presentation on TNR

"The people that support the current TCSO administration are either in "tight" with the dirty deeds or are in denial! The promotions of his supporters were expected! Unfortunately, so were the "witch hunts" for those that supported Whaley~both have happened!!

Boudreaux has done a few good things I guess, If you really think creating a character for the children and asking the children to help name a plane are what our county really needs right now. I personally feel it's much important to have deputies that are properly trained, Srgts promoted because they have the experience the same with Lts and Captains! The men and women that choose to work in Law Enforcement deal with so much, they should know that their commander "has their back".

The TCSO is just a joke to most of the other departments. I hope the day comes when everyone opens their eyes and sees Mike Boudreaux for what he really is."

— Shelly on FPPC Complaint Filed Against Tulare County Sheriff Boudreaux

"I'm not a fan of Phil cox and hope he loses or a fan of Amy Shuklian's but as a former part-time city employee with the Recreation Dept. the city of Visalia is wrong when it says they didn't lay people off during the recession. What about the cooks and help at the senior center and other part-time workers in the city? Don't they count too? I know one who lost his job cleaning buildings including the police station and than died at the age of 50 and he worked for the city for over 25yrs. They said he had a bad heart but you can't tell me him losing his job and becoming homeless didn't maybe play a little role? Now, why couldn't the full time employees take a pay cut or forgo a bigger raise or cut there big pensions to save others jobs? I think that is more christian than going to some prayer breakfast every year."

— Timothy Bianco on Political Fix (17 December, 2015)

"Based on assemblyman Devon Mathis profile I dare to say that he is representing the Tulare County with new values that would bring hopes to many people that have lost the trust in government. As a single mother and a student trying hard to succeed raising two children, it has been difficult for me finding a job that would give me stability to be able to help and support my family. I believe in education, and I think that giving people the chance to educate themselves would definitely change the perspective of how things should be done objectively.

Good Luck! Mr. Mathis
Blessings!

Maria R. Saldivar
Student: Fresno Pacific University"

— Maria Saldivar on Assemblyman Devon Mathis Attends Democratic Opening

Veteran's Corner

Family Caregiver Program

Joe Wright

Family Caregivers provide crucial support in caring for our Nation's Veterans by allowing them to stay in the homes and communities they defended, surrounded by the loved ones they fought for.

Caregivers in a home environment can enhance the health and well-being of Veterans under VA care. The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers has allowed VA to provide additional supports and services to Family Caregivers of eligible Veterans injured in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001.

In order for the Veteran to be eligible, the Veteran must have incurred or aggravated a serious injury (including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma or other mental disorder) in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001.

Because of the qualifying serious injury, the Veteran must require another person (a Caregiver) to assist the Veteran with the management of personal care functions required in everyday living. The serious injury must render the Veteran in need of personal care services for a minimum of six continuous months based on a clinical determination that takes into account various factors.

In order to be a Caregiver, the Caregiver must be at least 18 years of age. The Caregiver must be the Veteran's spouse, son, daughter, parent, step-family member, or extended family member; or someone who lives with the Veteran full time.

Prior to approval, the Caregiver will be provided with training and must be able to demonstrate the ability to assist the Veteran with personal care functions required in everyday living. Our office can assist with the application for this program.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license.

We can also issue Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents.

To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Commentary: Kaweah Delta's Newly Created Parking Taskforce

Lindsay Mann, KDHCD CEO

Kaweah Delta continues to plan for vital, life-saving health care services in support of this community's needs. These plans include a greatly expanded emergency department, completing the fifth and sixth floors of the Acequia Wing for cardiology and neonatal intensive care services and expanding our operating room capacity, and building a new urgent care center in North West Visalia. In addition, we are now planning for, and will seek community support, to build a new acute care hospital to meet state-mandated earthquake requirements and to meet the increasing patient care demands placed upon Kaweah Delta. (The original hospital does not meet California's stringent earthquake standards.)

These new health care services require that we plan for adequate parking. In that regard, I have established a parking task force, supported by expert consultative advice, to develop a master-parking plan for Kaweah Delta. This task force will study immediate and long-term parking needs, including study and action in the following areas:

1. Acquiring, with the city's assistance, the 106-space parking lot at the North East corner of Mineral King Avenue and Conyer Street.

2. Developing an additional 55 parking spaces immediately to the West of the Kaweah Delta Medical Center Acequia Wing.

3. Working with the City of Visalia to enhance utilization of the Acequia and Locust parking structures; both have a good deal of capacity which remains unused each day.

4. Developing a valet service for patients and visitors to enhance their convenience in accessing services at Kaweah Delta Medical Center.

5. Acquiring additional properties for parking including the study of the need for an additional parking structure in the future.

6. Relocating a number of outpatient healthcare services away from the downtown Medical Center when proximity to the acute-care hospital is not necessary. For example; a number of our services are now located on our West Campus where parking is very adequate.

7. Ensuring that our community knows of the many parking options available to them so that their access and convenience to parking is improved.

The results of the parking task force's efforts will be presented to the Kaweah Delta Board for action as formal recommendations are formulated. Enhancing the parking provided to our community at Kaweah Delta is a major priority. We are aware that it is often difficult to conveniently park at Kaweah Delta either to receive services or to visit those who may be in the hospital. The location of the Medical Center in the center of Visalia is of great benefit to the community – but providing convenient parking is harder downtown than if we were located elsewhere. We are now actively addressing this issue and as we develop additional parking solutions, such as those outlined above, we will keep you informed about our progress.

California High-Speed Rail Authority Announces Bid Results on Next 22 Miles

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) has identified California Rail Builders as the Apparent Best Value Proposer for the Design-Build Services Contract for Construction Package 4, the next segment of construction through the counties of Tulare and Kern, and the cities of Wasco and Shafter.

The Authority had estimated the cost of Construction Package 4 to be between $400 million to $500 million, but has determined that California Rail Builders, who bid $347,557,000, presented the "Apparent Best Value." The ranking and scores for all proposers are attached.

"We continue to attract world leading design and construction firms who want to be a part of high-speed rail in California," said Authority CEO Jeff Morales. "People are already and will continue to see major construction projects underway on over 100 miles of infrastructure in the Central Valley as we move this program forward."

California Rail Builders, who is comprised of FerrovialAgroman US Corp., has designed and constructed more than 65 high-speed rail projects worldwide. During the past eight years, Ferrovial has been awarded seven major design-build contracts in North America totaling $8 billion, including North Tarrant Express Segment 3A and 3C in Texas and Berth 142-143 Backland Automated Terminal in California.

In the competitive bidding process, five teams submitted Proposals to the Authority for the Design-Build Services Contract. Design-build combines project design and construction into a single contract. The Proposals were evaluated and ranked based on 30% for technical merit and 70% price. Factors such as an understanding of the project, schedule capacity, project approach and safety were part of the technical scoring.

In November 2014, the Authority issued a Request for Qualifications for potential design-build teams interested in the contract. Five teams were deemed qualified and began competing for the contract. On November 25, 2015, five teams submitted proposals, which were then reviewed by an evaluation panel of Authority staff and a representative from the City of Wasco.

Work on Construction Package 4 will extend approximately 22-miles through the Central Valley stretching from one mile north of the Tulare/Kern County line to Poplar Avenue north of Bakersfield. The work will include construction of at-grade, retained fill and aerial sections of the alignment, relocation of four miles of existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) tracks, construction of waterway and wildlife crossings and roadway reconstructions, relocations and closures. This phase of construction received state and federal environmental clearances in 2014.

This contract contains the Authority's 30% Small Business participation goals and assents to the Community Benefits Agreement, which is designed to target disadvantaged workers and provide them with job and training opportunities.

The Authority will continue to finalize the procurement process and a contract term sheet outlining the material provisions of the current contract will be presented to the Board of Directors at the January 12 board meeting in Sacramento. At that meeting, Authority staff will seek approval to conduct limited negotiations and enter into a contract with the Apparent Best Value Proposer.

VALLEY VOICE
Valley Scene
7 January, 2016

Chris Harrell Named Tulare Museum's Executive Director

Nancy Vigran

Tulare Historical Museum Curator Chris Harrell has taken on a new role handling the day-to-day operations of the museum as of January 1. Harrell, who has held curatorship for the museum since 2012, has been named the museum's executive director.

Harrell now carries both titles with the museum's former executive director, Terry Brazil, being named museum director.

The museum has been like a home-away-from-home for Harrell since he volunteered there while in high school. The Tulare-native found a love for history through the stories his family told, taking him through the museum doors.

"I have always loved history, and especially Tulare history," he said.

After graduating high school and attending COS, Harrell joined the Air Force. While serving, he attended classes in the Air Force Community College, and also studied with Pacific University. He earned his Master's Degree in Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at Vermont's Norwich University before returning to his hometown.

Upon his return, he again became involved with the museum, volunteering and co-curating some exhibits including the Manuel Toldeo Military Collection.

"People say to get a job that you like doing and I have been fortunate enough to do that," he said.

As curator, Harrell has and continues to oversee all of the permanent and temporary exhibits as well as the museum's records and archives. Now, added to his work load, he oversees management of the museum's operations.

Visitors can expect a bit of freshening of some museum's exhibits, as well as some potential new ones.

One in particular is the Tagus Ranch exhibit, which has been on the back-burner for some time, Harrell said. He plans for it to be done this year.

This exhibit will feature artifacts and photographs of the Tagus Ranch story from its "heyday" with the Grapes of Wrath migration and Dustbowl era to the restaurants and nightclubs where country music performers took the stage, and later, a motel.

The museum will retain its overall mission statement of who we are and what we do, Harrell said, but will see changes with the times and continue to attract visitors.

The museum is in the process of preserving audio-visual tapes, and looks to be able to share more. For example, Harrell said, there may be screens with some exhibits such as that of Bob Mathias and Sim Iness, showing film footage of their Olympic performances.

Harrell would also like to see more interactive items, where visitors, mainly children, can really have a hands-on experience. A civil-war era cannon ball sits at the entrance of the Military Collection room.

"I want them to touch that," he said. "And then go home and tell their parents about it."

These are things children and big folks hear about, but to actually be able to touch and feel a cannon ball used in battle 150 years ago is quite an experience, he said.

"I want to get the stories out there and get them told," Harrell said. "When you come to a museum, you want to soak all of it up.

"I want them (people) to walk away, impressed, and proud of the fact that so many great things have come out of the City of Tulare and Tulare County. With that, they're proud of themselves and where they come from."

Curator Chris Harrell, who has been involved with the Tulare Historical Museum since his high school days, now serves as the executive director as well. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

Harrell is proud of that and the museum, as is Brazil, who will continue her

TULARE MUSEUM continued on **23 »**

Surfer Blood

Surfer Blood & Cayucas Coming to The Cellar Door January 14

Staff Reports

Surfer Blood and Cayucas will co-headline a 21+ show at the Cellar Door on Thursday, January 14.

Surfer Blood is an alternative rock band from West Palm Beach, Florida. The band has four members: John Paul Pitts (lead vocals/guitar), Mike Mcleary (guitar/backing vocals), Lindsey Mills (bass guitar/backing vocals) and Tyler Schwarz (drums).

Founding members Pitts and Schwarz started playing music together in Orlando, Florida with other former band members. The band was originally called Jabroni Sandwich. Schwarz randomly came up with the name Surfer Blood during a conversation with Pitts about his surfer backpack from high school. Since then Mcleary and Mills have joined.

The band's 2009 debut single, *Swim*, gained much critical acclaim and was named as the 37th best track on Pitchfork's 100 Best Songs of that year. They released their debut album, *Astro Coast*, in January of 2010.

Surfer Blood was widely considered to be the breakout band of 2009's CMJ Music Marathon. In March of 2010, playing songs Astro Coast, Surfer Blood made quite a splash at the SXSWNPR music party. They returned to SXSW in 2011. In May 2010, the band played at the ATP music festival curated by Pavement along with other groups such as Broken Social Scene, The Walkmen, and Atlas Sound.] Later that month, Surfer Blood headed over to Spain to join the lineup at the San Miguel Primavera Sound Festival. In August of that year, Surfer Blood finished out the summer playing two more festivals; Splendour in the Grass in Australia and Summer

CELLAR DOOR continued on **18 »**

Symphony Concert Features Rachmaninoff Piano Concerto

Donna Orozco

For those who love to hear a good piano concerto, something by the ebullient Rachmaninoff is always a good choice. The Tulare County Symphony opens its 2016 concerts with Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 1" on Saturday, January 23 at 7:30pm at the Visalia Fox Theatre.

The Russian composer is still considered one of the most outstanding players in history, and thus his music is always a challenge for a pianist.

Guest soloist for the concert is Andrew Tyson, who has won many awards during his short career and has performed all over the world. Three years ago, he performed the more well-known Rachmaninoff "Piano Concerto #2" with the Symphony.

The composer wrote this concerto in 1891 at the age of 18. He revised it in 1917, but although the revision revealed much maturity, the piece retains the elements of youthful vivacity and impetuosity.

Also on the program is Elgin's "Variations on an Original Theme," an interesting piece because each variation is based on the characteristics of friends.

Edward Elgar is probably the best known English composer of the early 20th Century. His wife had quite an impact on his compositions.

The story goes that one night Elgar started improvising on the piano, and his wife encouraged him to create something that had never been done before, portray his friends musically.

Elgar said of the piece that is was "commenced in a spirt of humor and continued in deep seriousness…The

Andrew Tyson

sketches are not 'portraits,' but each variation contains a distinct idea founded on some particular personality or perhaps on some incident known only to two people."

The piece is also called "Enigma Variations." Exactly what the enigma refers to is still a mystery, but it is believed to have involved a hidden melody.

Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main Street, Suite D, Visalia, downstairs in Montgomery Square. Student prices are $10. Tickets are also available at 732-8600 or go to www.tularecountysymphony.com.

The concert begins at 7:30pm, but the audience is invited to attend the pre-concert preview by music director Bruce Kiesling at 6:45pm.

Celtic Band to Perform at Lindsay Community Theater

The next concert in the Lindsay Community Theater concert series features Tempest, a Celtic rock band from the Bay Area, for one performance only onSaturday, January 16. The band combines traditional Celtic music with Norwegian and European folk, American folkand progressive rock.

The original band formed in 1988 with Norwegian-born Lief Sorbye (mandolin, vocals) and Cuban Adolfo Lazo (drums) as two of its founding members. Currently the band also includes Kathy Buys (fiddle), Gregory Jones (guitar) and CaithThreefires (bass), all from the US.

According to the band's website – "since forming in 1988, Tempest has delivered a globally-renowned hybrid of high-energy Folk Rock fusing Irish reels, Scottish ballads, Norwegian influences and other world music elements. The last 26 years have seen the San Francisco Bay Area-based act release 15 critically acclaimed CDs and play more than 2,000 gigs. It's also enjoyed an evolving line-up that's enabled musicianship and creativity to rise with each new member.

Photo by Aleksandr Milewski, courtesy of Tempest

"Signed to Sony-distributed Magna Carta Records, Tempest's releases are acclaimed worldwide. The group's latest studio CD, *The Tracks We Leave*, may be the band's most exciting work to date, as their unique blend of world music elements showcases inventive new original and traditional material."

Tempest has been invited to play a number of times at the Philadelphia Folk Festival and they also host an eclectic music and arts festival of its own in Auburn, the first weekend of May each year. It has played at Denmark's Skagen Festival, Britain's Cropredy Festival and the Winniped Folk Festival, as well as numerous US Celtic Festivals.

The concert begins at 7:30pm. All seats are $20. The Lindsay Community Theater is located at 190 North Elm Street. Tickets may be purchased at the theater website, www.lindsaycommunitytheater.org or at the door.

Cellar Door

Continued from p. 17

Sonic in Tokyo.

Cayucas will co-headline the show.

On their last album, *Bigfoot*, Cayucas debuted in a way that defied their namesake, the seaside town of Cayucos. As listeners fell in love with its shimmering west coast vibes, Zach Yudin watched his bedroom recording project transform into a band that toured the world almost overnight, all while his songs raced across the radio.

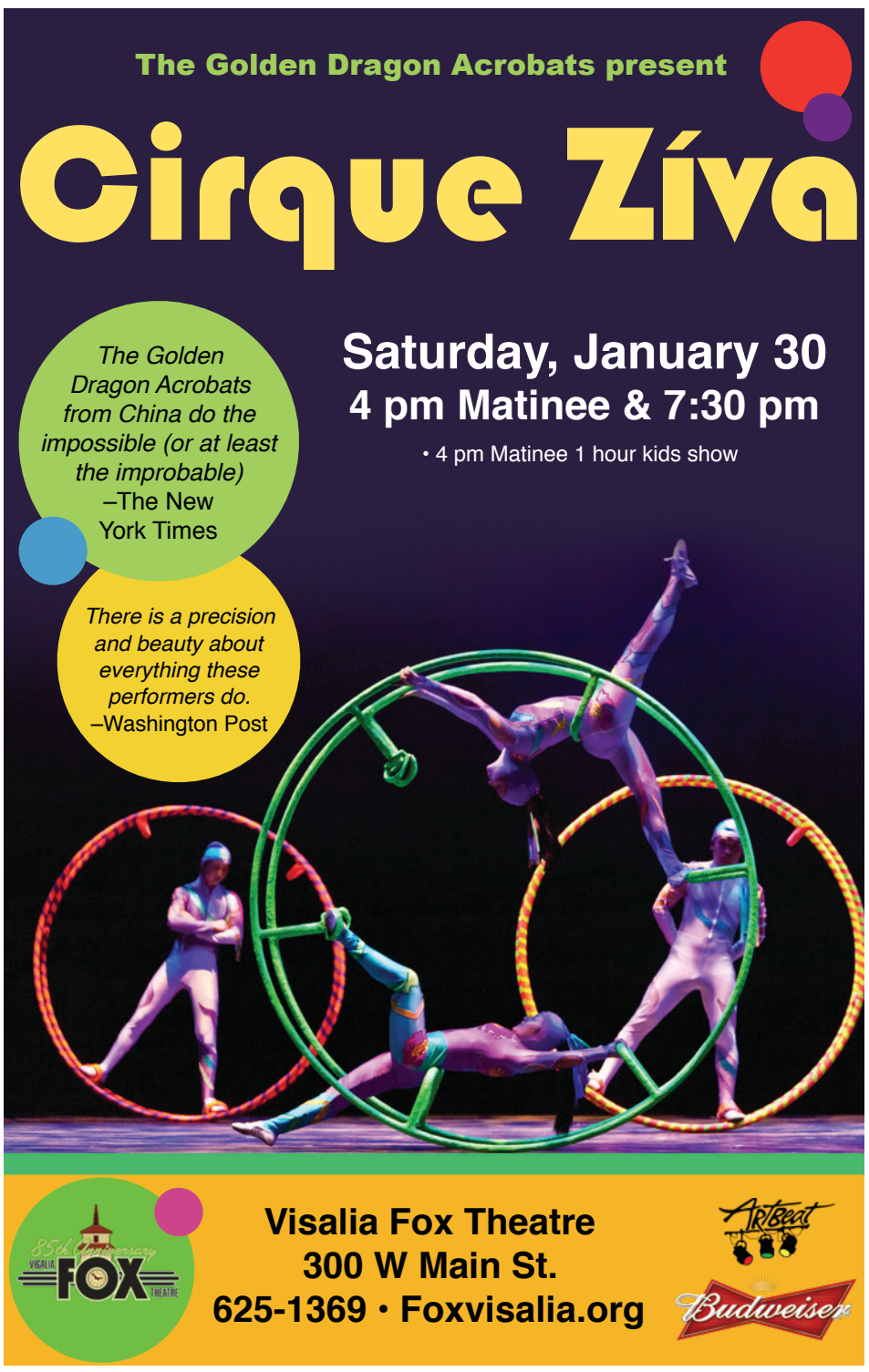
But as Zach and his twin brother and band mate, Ben, went on to create what would become their new album, what it all came back to was something more personal. While they now call Los Angeles home, they drew from the nostalgia of their childhood growing up in Davis, California; the nostalgia in their music that is as much about a place they've never been (that maybe no one's been to) as any actual experience. It was a freedom to imagine, to explore ideas. And it was that wandering imagination and a punchy California dream that eventually grew to become *Dancing at the Blue Lagoon*.

While their sun-drenched, jangly, sometimes melancholic sound is quintessentially Californian, the album is very much their California. It is the sound of kids from the suburbs who fantasize in Technicolor, whose view of the Golden State is its own form of idealism. You can hear it loud and clear in the easygoing confidence throughout on the crisp, backbeat-driven *Hella* or as *Moony Eyed Walrus* takes surf guitar into fragmented, unpredictable places. The impossibly catchy and heartbreaking *Backstroke* is a neo-noir Murakami-inspired detective story that is equal parts stylization and gut-level emotion.

The band has performed on five continents, toured with bands like The Pixies and Guided By Voices, played on the Jimmy Fallon Show, at Coachella and festivals throughout the world, while also occasionally plugging in their amps at all-ages house parties.

Twin brothers Zach and Ben are Cayucas.

Tickets for the 9pm show are $15 and are available at the door. The Cellar Door is located at 101 West Main Street in Visalia.



Escape with Visalia Chamber to South Africa

Staff Reports

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce invites you to escape on a once in a lifetime trip to spectacular South Africa and experience culture and nature in harmony. The fourteen-day stay is an amazing chance to take in breathtaking scenery, experience rich cultural histories, and get up close and personal with wild animals. Find out more about this unique opportunity January 12 at noon at the Chamber of Commerce office. The Tour Operator is sending a special representative for one day only to present a special slideshow on the trip and answer questions about the tour directly.

The trip is planned to take place from September 22 through October 5 in 2016, but there are options to spend 3 nights in Dubai before the tour starts and/or 3 nights in Victoria Falls after the tour ends. The tour includes several amenities, including round-trip airfare from Fresno Air Terminal as well as hotels and several meals.

The getaway begins in Sandton, South Africa – the cosmopolitan center of Johannesburg. Tours will take you from there through Soweto (South West Township) to explore the area's rich history; this includes museum tours that chronicle students' fight against apartheid and an excursion to Liliesleaf, where Nelson Mandela was arrested. From there escape into nature with a few days exploring Kruger National Park, the largest game reserve in South Africa. A local expert will lead you on an open-air-vehicle safari game drive in search of elephants, buffalo, lions, leopards, and rhinos.

After you explore Kruger National Park, you will fly to Knysa, a picturesque resort town. Enjoy the opportunity to explore Featherbed Nature Reserve with a lagoon cruise and a drive through the biologically rich forest. Find your way back to civilization by visiting a local school and learning about the efforts being made to educate the region's children. After that you'll get to enjoy a guided tour of one of the older working ostrich farms in the area and have the opportunity to ride one of the birds. You will then travel to the heart of the wine lands region and explore Stellenbosch, one of the oldest European settlements in the region, before enjoying a wine tasting.

End your journey in Cape Town, where you will get to ride a cable car to the top of Table Mountain, offering stunning panoramas of the surrounding area. Travel out to Cape Point and spend some time with the penguins at Boulders Beach, then explore the famous Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens. Enjoy a free day to venture out on your own before saying goodbye to South Africa with a lesson on the Djembe Drums, a hand washing ceremony, and a communal African dining experience.

Booking your unforgettable trip to South Africa before March 23 allows you to take advantage of lower prices. Currently a double occupancy booking runs $4,899 per person and a single occupancy booking runs $5,599. This includes airfare, hotels, excursions, 12 breakfasts, 4 lunches, and 6 dinners.

Visitors can view zebras and many other animals in South Africa's Kruger National Park

South Africa's famous Table Mountain, with tablecloth.

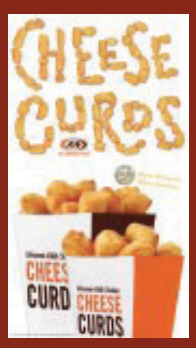
About the Visalia Chamber of Commerce:

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce serves as the "voice of business" and provides strategic leadership and engagement in building the future of business and the community through information, services, and advocacy to the employers of our community. The Visalia Chamber of Commerce is the largest business organization in Tulare County. Its members include small businesses, corporations, associations, and individual professionals.

Since 1899, the Chamber has worked diligently with local government, education, private industry and a host of other agencies and organizations to improve the business environment and promote Visalia as premier community in which to live, work and do business.

For additional information contact Nicola Wissler at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce at (559) 734-5876 or by email at nicola@visaliachamber.org.

A&W ALL AMERICAN FOOD



EXETER
420 N. Kaweah Ave.

HANFORD
1675 W. Lacey Blvd.
1113 10th Ave.

TULARE
133 North J St.

VISALIA
301 S. Willis St.
2611 S Mooney Blvd.
2124 W. Riggins Ave

Wedding Planning made easy and fun

Save time and money by comparing the finest bridal businesses in the area!

All in One Place… All In One Day
Sunday, January 17, 2016
11:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Visalia Wyndham Hotel
Formerly the Visalia Holiday Inn
9000 W. Airport Dr., Visalia

Tickets at the door $12. Register at *www.abridalodyssey.com for $2.00 discount coupon.*

A Bridal Odyssey
Bridal Show and Expo

"Sweet Treasurers" wedding cake dive
High energy fashion show at 2:30 pm
Grand prize. . . 7-day Dream Honeymoon
Prizes awarded throughout the day

/ Fashion Show
/ Exhibits
/ Tastings
/ Prizes

Brides Magazine is giving every registered bride a one-year subscription with your paid admission to the show.

Produced by 'Mancini' Productions

Featured Sponsors:
BSPI Bridal Show Producers International
Association for Wedding Professionals International
Wyndham Hotel Group
WeddingWire
Premier Bride
Brides
www.BridalShowNearYou.com

Like us on Facebook to stay up to date on show information and bridal show dates.

Calendar

Mondays: Bridge Club, 9:30am-2pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. Admission is free. For additional information call: Joan Dinwiddie @ 732-0855

Mondays: Knitters, 10am-12:30pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. Everyone is welcome.

Fridays: Women's Morning Bible Study, 9am-Noon
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. For additional information call: 739-9010

2nd Tuesday, Monthly: Yappy Hour, 5-9pm
Well-mannered, leashed pets are welcome on the patio at the Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 514 East Main Street, Suite A, in Visalia. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Valley Oak SPCA. For more information, call 651-1111.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Gathering At the Oval, 12:30-1pm
Lifting up the needs and concerns of Visalia through individual prayer and meditation at Oval Park, 808 North Court Street in Visalia. For more information, call 967-4065.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Board Game Night, 6-7:45pm
For ages 10+ at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 West Oak Street. Sign-ups are not required. For more information, call 713-2703.

1st and 3rd Thursdays: Central Valley Tea Party Meetings, 6pm
819 West Visalia Road, Farmersville.

JANUARY

January 7: Friends of the Three Rivers Library Event, 6:30pm
At the Three Rivers Library, Gene Verbeet will discuss the Golden Trout Wilderness, based on his book, "The Golden Trout Wilderness: The Forty-Year Struggle to Preserve the Ancient Territory of the California Golden Trout," which will be available for sale. Free; all ages welcome. 561-4564.

January 8: Veteran and Senior's breakfast, 7:30am-9am
At Lemoore Veterans Memorial Building, 411 West D St. in Lemoore. Attendance is free. For more information call the American Legion at 924-3907.

January 8: Central Valley Parkinson's Support Group Meeting, 10:30am
In the Pre School Center of Visalia United Methodist Church located at 5200 West Caldwell, Visalia. Program - Video on Parkinson's. Plan to join us for lunch and good conversation after the meeting: www.cvpsg.net or cvparkinsons@gmail.com or 559-563-0725.

January 8: A Night of Comedy Featuring Darren Carter, 6pm
Amy Shuklian hosts a fundraiser and performs the opening act for Darren Carter at the Main Street Theatre, 307 East Main Street in Visalia. There will be a VIP meet-and greet with Amy and Darren at 6pm. Doors open at 7pm for the 8pm show. Tickets will be available at the door or at amyforsupervisor.com

January 8: Call Me James, 9pm
Barmageddon, 126 East Kern Avenue in Tulare, will host Call Me James. Tickets for the 21+ show are $5 in advance and $7 at the door.

January 9: Winter Trout Derby, 8am-10am
Youngsters 15 and under compete at Plaza Park Pond, 700 South Plaza Street in Visalia. Registration is $5 in advance or $7 on the day of the event. For more information, call the Visalia Parks & Recreation Department at 713-4365.

January 9: Nolan Eggert Memorial Blood Drive, 11am-3pm
Come to the Black Bear Diner at 1790 W. Lacey Blvd. in Hanford and honor Nolan Eggert with your gift of life. Donors must be in good general health, weigh a minimum of 110 pounds and be at least 17 years old (16 years old with written parental consent). Photo ID and Social Security number are required at donor registration. Donors should eat a good meal and drink plenty of water within four hours prior to their donation. Donors can give blood every eight weeks. For more information, call 288-6319 or visit www.donateblood.org.

January 9: Women of the City's "Winter Seminar Luncheon," 11:30am-2:30pm
Learn how to leave things in the past and move on at Tommy's Restaurant, 130 North Encina Street in Visalia. Price is $30. For more information, call 888-247-5416.

January 9: Snowshoe Hike, 1pm
Meet at Giant Forest Museum, Sequoia National Park. A two-hour, ranger-led stroll through the Giant Forest Grove. Wear winter clothing and waterproof footwear. Due to a limited number of snowshoes, reservations are required by calling 565-4480.

January 11: Project Homeless Connect clothing drive, 8am-3pm
The Business Technology Center, 905 N. Campus Dr. in Hanford, will be collecting washable items for men, women and children. Coats, sweaters, Tee and long sleeved shirts, pants, socks, shoes, boots, hats, gloves, scarves and blankets. All sizes welcome. For more information call David Lopez at 639-8612.

January 11: Valley Oak Quilt Guild Meeting, 11am
At Tulare Community Church, 1820 North Gem in Tulare. Charlene from the Parenting Network will speak about the recipients of the "Komforters for Kids" project. She works with the parents of special needs infants. For more information, contact Diane at 559-733-8536.

January 11: Three Rivers Community Plan Update: Public Input Meeting, 6pm
At the Three Rivers Memorial Building County planners will conduct a meeting on the status of the Three Rivers Community Plan and receive input regarding local priorities for the future direction of the town. On this month's agenda: (1) Flooding (FEMA/Primary and Secondary Flood Plain Zoning), (2) Emergency Preparedness and Access, and (3) other topics as related. 624-7130.

January 12: Travel Slideshow Presentation: Spectacular South Africa, Noon-1pm
Learn about the September 22 - October 5, 2016 trip at the Visalia Chamber of Commerce Office, 222 N. Garden St. #300.

January 12: Free Neighborhood Market - Hanford, 12-3pm
Hour of Truth Ministry will hosting a year round, Free Neighborhood Market, sponsored by Community Food Bank and partners in Hanford's Centennial Park, 11731 Hanford Armona Road. For more information call Hour of Truth Ministry at 1-800-651-8139.

January 12: Yappy Hour, 5-9pm
Well-mannered, leashed pets are welcome on the patio at the Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 514 East Main Street, Suite A, in Visalia. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Valley Oak SPCA. This event takes place on the second Tuesday, monthly. For more information, call 651-1111.

January 12: The Tulare Chamber of Commerce Presents: The Colorado Rockies Featuring National Parks and Historic Trains Highlights, 5:30-6:30pm
Included are Denver, Rocky Mountain National Park, Grand Junction, Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, Colorado National Monument, Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Mesa Verde National Park, Pike's Peak Cog Railway, Garden of the Gods. At 220 East Tulare Avenue in Tulare. For more information, call Jill Worley, Sea Bound Travel, Inc. at (559) 686-8085.

January 12: Visalia Vascular Institute Educational Seminar--Diabetes Overview: Kidneys and the Circulatory System, 6:30pm
Dr. Muhammad S. Chaudhri presents a monthly educational seminar at the Visalia Vascular Institute, 119 South Locust Street. For more information, call 627-0112.

January 12: Forever Tango, 7:30pm
Starring Anna Trebunskaya and Dmitry Chaplin as seen on "Dancing with the Stars," FOREVER TANGO will perform an engagement at Visalia Fox Theatre. Tickets for FOREVER TANGOstart at $25. VIP tickets are available for $95 and include a post show meet & greet with Trebunskaya and Chaplin, preferred seating and a FOREVER TANGO CD. All tickets can be purchased now online at foxvisalia.org, by phone at 559.625.1369 or in person at the Box Office [300 Main Street].

January 13: Way Back Wednesdays--Classic Flicks at the Fox, 7pm
On the second Wednesday monthly through April, 2016, the Visalia Fox Theatre presents a classic film. Admission is $5 and includes a small popcorn. Tonight: Bringing Up Baby, 1938.

January 14: Project Homeless Connect clothing drive, 8am-3pm
The Business Technology Center, 905 N. Campus Dr. in Hanford, will be collecting washable items for men, women and children. Coats, sweaters, Tee and long sleeved shirts, pants, socks, shoes, boots, hats, gloves, scarves and blankets. All sizes welcome. For more information call David Lopez at 639-8612.

January 14: Twist & Shout, 11am
A dance class for those affected by Parkinson's Disease, their partners, helpers and friends. Seated or standing motions for fun and flexibility at West Visalia Grange, 327 North Shirk Road. Pre-register with Kathy Page at katlou59@comcast.net. For more information, call 240-3200.

January 14: Exeter Chamber Ambassador's Meeting, Noon
You are invited to join us at our January Ambassador's no host lunch-meeting at Cappella's Coffee House at 132 North E St. in Exeter. Interested in becoming an Exeter Chamber of Commerce Ambassador? Join us at a lunch or call the Exeter Chamber of Commerce at (559) 592-2919 or email at chamber@exeterchamber.com

January 14: The Four Tops With The Temptations, 7:30pm
Doors open at 6pm for the show located in the Bingo Hall of Lemoore's Tachi Palace Hotel & Casino. Tickets are $35, $45, $75.

January 14: Surfer Blood & Cayucas, 9pm
The two bands co-headline a 21+ show at The Cellar Door, 101 West Main Street in Visalia. Tickets are $15.

January 15-17: Sierra Winter Classic
The 28th annual Sierra Winter Classic Beef Show is headed to the Porterville Fairgrounds.In 1989 a small group of Cattle Breeders, 4-H Leaders and Parents got together and wanted to provide an opportunity for young Beef Exhibitors to showcase their projects before their final show of the season, from that the Annual Sierra Winter Classic Steer & Heifer show was born. The show is now host to over 300 head of cattle, 200 exhibitors and their family members from throughout the State of California and beyond. The show is held every year over the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Observance weekend. The Sierra Winter Classic is a project of the Porterville Jr. Fair Board, a group of (16) 4-H & FFA member's age's 14-19. The show allows the Jr. Fair Board

the experience of running a Jr. Livestock show with the assistance from the adult committee members. Exhibitors compete for prizes and premium money. Prizes consist of Buckles & Jackets for the Champion Heifer and Champion Prospect & Progress Steers, Jackets for Showmanship winners, Framed Photos for Breed Champions and multiple class prizes. The show would not be the success that it is if not for the generous donations from Feed Company Vendors, Local Business, Cattle Breeders and Individuals. The Sierra Winter Classic partners with the California Jr. Livestock Association to give our exhibitors an opportunity to accumulate points for that organizations year end prizes should they wish to become a CJLA member.

January 15: Veteran and Senior's breakfast, 7:30am-9am
At Lemoore Veterans Memorial Building, 411 West D St. in Lemoore. Attendance is free. For more information call the American Legion at 924-3907.

January 16: Sierra Traditional Jazz Club Concert, 2pm
At the Three Rivers Memorial Building. Monthly concert will be headlined by High Sierra Jazz Band. Admission: $10 (STJC members free).

January 16: Sparkle Princess Concert, 6pm
Six princesses and a pirate will sing, dance and perform skits at Lemoore High School, 101 East Bush St. in Lemoore. There will be interactive games and stories, raffle prizes and a princess meet and greet. Children can come in their prince and princess attire. Admission is $10. For more information call Lemoore Parks and Recreation at 924-6767.

January 16: Charity Basketball Game, 7pm
"Shoots & Ladder," a charity basketball game between Hanford Police Department and Hanford Fire Department, takes place at Hanford High School, 120 East Grangeville Blvd. in Hanford. Tickets, $5, can be purchased at Hanford Police Dept., 425 North Irwin St., Hanford and Hanford Fire Dept., 350 West Grangeville Blvd., Hanford.

January 17: A Bridal Odyssey, 11am-4pm
Fashion show starts at 2:30 at the Wyndam Hotel, 9000 West Airport Drive, in Visalia. Tickets are $12 at the door. For more information, call 733-0741.

January 18: Project Homeless Connect clothing drive, 8am-3pm
The Business Technology Center, 905 N. Campus Dr. in Hanford, will be collecting washable items for men, women and children. Coats, sweaters, Tee and long sleeved shirts, pants, socks, shoes, boots, hats, gloves, scarves and blankets. All sizes welcome. For more information call David Lopez at 639-8612.

January 18: Square Eights Hall dance lessons, 7pm
Learn to square dance at Square Eights Hall, 11555 Fargo Avenue in Hanford. If this is your first time round the floor its free. The first class is free. Couples and singles age 8 to 99 years are welcome to join. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Meet new friends. Refreshments provided. Cost is $4 for adults and $2 for teens. For any questions call 582-1640 and leave message.

January 18: FREE ENTRANCE DAY IN THE NATIONAL PARKS
At all National Park Service sites that charge an entrance fee (including Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks). In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, entrance fees will be waived. In commemoration of 100 years of the National Park Service, there will be 16 fee-free days in 2016.

January 20: China Trip information meeting, 6pm
At the Exeter Chamber of Commerce Office at 101 W. Pine St. in Exeter at 6 pm. For more information call the Chamber at (559) 592-2919.

January 21: Project Homeless Connect clothing drive, 8am-3pm
The Business Technology Center, 905 N. Campus Dr. in Hanford, will be collecting washable items for men, women and children. Coats, sweaters, Tee and long sleeved shirts, pants, socks, shoes, boots, hats, gloves, scarves and blankets. All sizes welcome. For more information call David Lopez at 639-8612.

January 21: Veterans Aid and Attendance Workshop, 6-7:30pm
At Quail Park Retirement Village. Veterans can earn up to $25,022 of tax-free income per year to pay for assistance with activities of daily living. Find out more by attending this free event. Guest speaker is Gilbert Fleming, Elder Law Attorney. For additional information or to RSVP, call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

January 21: Dwight Yoakam, 7:30pm
At the Visalia Fox Theatre. $49-$75 + service fees. VIP Experience is $175 (includes premier ticket) + service fees. **VIP Experience!** — Each package includes the following: One (1) ticket to the show; One (1) signed item - provided by artist, no personal items please, Meet & Greet photo - photographer provided, no personal cameras please; Two (2) Dwight Yoakam signature guitar picks.

January 22: Veteran and Senior's breakfast, 7:30am-9am
At Lemoore Veterans Memorial Building, 411 West D St. in Lemoore. Attendance is free. For more information call the American Legion at 924-3907.

January 22: Tulare Chamber of Commerce 132nd Annual Awards Banquet, 6-9pm
Honoring the 2015 award recipients: Man of the Year, Ken Nunes; Woman of the Year, Nancy Gregg; Small Business of the Year, California Turf Equipment & Supply; Large Business of the Year, Amdal In Home Care; Ambassador of the Year, Sharon Allison-Crook. Special Guest Speaker: Congressman Devin Nunes - 22nd District of California. At the Heritage Complex at the International Agri-Center, 4500 South Laspina Street, in Tulare. Tickets are $60.

January 22: 58th annual Installation & Awards Banquet, 6pm
Join the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce, in the Blue Oak conference room at the Tachi Palace, 17225 Jersey Avenue in Lemoore, as they honor the recipients of 2016 citizen, business and organization of the year. Tickets, $65, are not available at the door. Reservation deadline is January 15. For more information call the Lemoore Chamber of Commerce at 924-6401.

January 23: Tule Fog Run, 7am
Run/walk along the St. John's River trail beginning at Cutler Park, 15520 Ivanhoe Drive in Visalia. Check-in at 7am, with the Kids' Fun Run starting at 7:45am and the race beginning at 8am.Registration is $25 for the for the 5k Walk/Run, $25 for the 10k Run, and $15 for the Kids' Fun Run. Fees will rise by $10 after January 14. For more information call the Visalia Parks & Recreation Department at 713-4365.

January 23: Run for Education Fundraiser, 7:30am
Come out to West Hills College Lemoore, 555 College Avenue in Lemoore, and run for education, the event will benefit several WHCL programs, including the HOPE initiative, which drives pre-college initiatives including the annual Eagle Dayz event; Team Teach, the WHCL teacher development program; and scholarships for the 5c Experience summer program, which allows middle school students to explore math and science. All participants will get a free pancake breakfast and pair of neon socks. The event will also feature a bit of fun, with a team lip sync battle contest and a funky sock competition. Cost is $25 students with a valid ID card, $35 non-students, $40 day of event.

January 23: Sequoia National Park Job Fair, 9am-4pm
At the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Avenue, be prepared to interview for jobs (most of which are summer-seasonal). Positions are varied and available from multiple employers. www.sequoiaparksconservancy.org.

January 23: Veterans Aid and Attendance Workshop, 10-11:30am
At Quail Park Retirement Village. Veterans can earn up to $25,022 of tax-free income per year to pay for assistance with activities of daily living. Find out more by attending this free event. Guest speaker is Gilbert Fleming, Elder Law Attorney. For additional information or to RSVP, call 624-3503. Quail Park is located at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia.

January 23: Lindsay Chamber Awards Dinner, 5:30pm
The annual awards dinner was established to recognize significant contributions made by the Lindsay community members and businesses. Awards will be presented to individuals who have exemplified the spirit of Lindsay. The awards dinner will take place at McDermont Field House and Sports Center in Lindsay. For more information, call 562-4929.

January 23: Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 1", 7:30pm
The Tulare County Symphony opens its 2016 concerts with Rachmaninoff's "Piano Concerto No. 1" on Saturday, Jan. 23 at 7:30pm at the Visalia Fox Theatre. Tickets are $30 to $39.50 at the symphony office, 208 W. Main Street, Suite D, Visalia, downstairs in Montgomery Square. Student prices are $10. Tickets are also available at 732-8600 or go to www.tularecountysymphony.com. The concert begins at 7:30pm, but the audience is invited to attend the pre-concert preview by music director Bruce Kiesling at 6:45pm.

January 25: An Afternoon At the Movies, 1pm
In the Assembly Room at St. Anthony Retreat Center in Three Rivers, a showing of the film *Music of the Heart,* starring Meryl Streep and Cloris Leachman. Sponsored by Aging in Community-Three Rivers. Refreshments. Rides provided for those without transportation (call 465-4666 or 561-4703). Free; open to the public.

January 25: Square Eights Hall dance lessons, 7pm
Learn to square dance at Square Eights Hall, 11555 Fargo Avenue in Hanford. If this is your first time round the floor its free. The first class is free. Couples and singles age 8 to 99 years are welcome to join. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing. Meet new friends. Refreshments provided. Cost is $4 for adults and $2 for teens. For any questions call 582-1640 and leave message.

January 28: Twist & Shout, 11am
A dance class for those affected by Parkinson's Disease, their partners, helpers and friends. Seated or standing motions for fun and flexibility at West Visalia Grange, 327 North Shirk Road. Pre-register with Kathy Page at katlou59@comcast.net. For more information, call 240-3200.

Send your calendar items to: editor@ourvalleyvoice.com

Sports

Opinion: The Conflict and Risk of Modern Football

Stefan Barros

Will Smith stars in a new film "Concussion" that exposes the lack of interest the National Football League (NFL) showed in protecting its players from the danger of head injuries. This topic is tough for football fans to acknowledge due to the fact that the sport is by far the most popular in the U.S.

I will throw myself into that boat of fans that is having a tough time facing this reality. I am huge football fan. I like college football, but the NFL is where my passion lies. This film will scare football fans and it should especially scare NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell and other NFL executives.

Even though this will be a tough movie to watch, I will watch it because I'm a big Will Smith fan, and he rarely stars a bad movie. But the biggest reason is that this will be information that NFL fans, and fans of football, need to know. Fans can't be in the dark when it comes to knowing the risks that the players face, and long-term conditions that concussions might possibly give rise to.

I have watched some interviews that Smith has done discussing the movie, and he also spoke of the conflict he felt about making the film. Smith himself is a big football fan. His oldest son played high school football in Los Angeles for four years and Smith talked about how he would go out of his way to watch his son play. He spoke about not wanting to be the person to expose this information about the NFL, but said, in the end, he felt this information was too important to keep in the dark.

That really does seem to be the overall feeling that comes from the making of this movie, and the feeling that football fans will feel in seeing the previews, and eventually watching the movie. I feel the conflict, but also want to know more about the dangers, and risks these players are taking when they take the field. The obvious risk that the film exposes is that of a concussion, which was once thought of as merely a short-term injury which takes about a week to heal from, sometimes less than that, because teams weren't educated on the risks and threw players right back into the very same game in which they suffered the concussion. Until recently there was no concussion protocol whatsoever.

The other giant issue the movie exposes with the possible long-term effect of concussions is the debilitating disease known as CTE or Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. Concussions are seen as causal to this condition. Some of the symptoms of CTE include memory loss, confusion, aggression and dementia. This has led to the death of 20 players, all at the NFL level. There are also 33 living former players who have either CTE or ALS, another debilitating disease caused by head trauma.

These figures are only at the NFL level, and there could be many more cases at the college and high school levels that we aren't aware of. This has caused many parents and coaches at the youth levels to panic as well. When it was discovered that football hall of famer and Bakersfield-native Frank Gifford died of CTE back in August, Dr. Bennet Omalu, (the man behind Will Smith's character) called for an end to youth football and even high school football.

I am fully aware of the risks that football players of all ages face when it comes to head injuries, but Dr. Omalu's hot take was a little off-base. Kids playing football at the youth and high school levels aren't just learning to play football, they are learning life lessons when it comes to working together as a team and building friendships and bonds with other players that could last a lifetime. I can vouch for that because I played youth football from ages 10-12. During games I had the fun of a lifetime, and I would hate to take that away from young kids.

But this is much more of an NFL issue, and the league will definitely have to deal with people who think it is not doing enough to protect its players, even hiding potential dangers. Though the talk of the dangers of football have heated up in the past five years, the NFL and the sport of football have never been more popular, and I have actually increased my viewing of the sport. Fantasy football has a lot to do with it, but football is just a beautiful sport. I would hate to see it go away, but I also understand that it is possibility if more players are revealed to have CTE.

The beauty of the game is that some of the greatest athletes in the world are playing. It's sort of poetic when you see a lighting fast-running back break through the defensive line for a 50-yard touchdown, or a freakish athlete like Calvin Johnson go up to grab a football at its highest point over a defensive back. Athletes like that are what make football great and fun to watch. That is why, even though I am aware of the risks, I still watch the game. And that's all football is, is a risk. It's not a guarantee that if you play football you will get CTE and be unable to walk at age 40.

Driving to work every day is a risk. I don't see football being very different from that.

Poker Tournament to Benefit West Hills College Coalinga Baseball Team

A poker tournament will be held on Saturday, January 23, with all proceeds from the event going toward the West Hills College Coalinga baseball team.

Only 60 seats are available in the tournament, which has a $50 buy-in and will give players the chance to win many non-cash prizes including a new flat-screen television, gift certificates to restaurants and shops, and a free foursome at the Lemoore Golf Course.

"This will be an annual event and will allow us to bring the community together right before our season starts, so it can really kick things off in a positive way," said Stefan McGovern, head baseball coach. "Every year we pay thousands of dollars in annual expenses for travel, meals, team uniforms and field equipment. If we are able to show the people of Coalinga a good

time, while also finding an effective way to raise money for our team in the process, I believe that everybody wins."

The event will be held at the Eagle's Hall at 156 W. Durian and will begin at 5:30pm. There will be prizes for the top 10 finishers. There will also be a 50/50 raffle.

To sign up, contact McGovern by phone or email at stefanmcgovern@whccd.edu, or (559) 934-2458, or send $50 check or money order to: West Hills College Coalinga, Attn: Stefan McGovern/Athletics, 300 W. Cherry Lane, Coalinga, CA, 93210.

Checks should be made out to: WHCCD Foundation-Baseball.

On Facebook at facebook.com/ourvalleyvoice

Print replica edition at issuu.com/ourvalleyvoice

Eighty-four pieces are art are featured in the Tulare Historical Museum's Miniatures art exhibit and will be raffled off at the end of the show, March 12. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

Two Art Exhibits to View at Tulare Historical Museum Through March 12

Nancy Vigran

Visitors may take advantage of 84 chances to win at the Tulare Historical Museum's 9th Annual Miniatures art exhibit now through March 12. Some 33 local artists are participating in this year's show, all painting or photographing a variety of subject matter in a 7"x9" format.

"We feel very lucky that these wonderful artists contribute," said Terry Brazil, museum director.

Artwork is in varied form, including watercolors, acrylics, oils and photographs.

"Some are very bright, some subdued," she said, "some are from unusual angles. They are painted in the field or from old photos."

Over the years the Miniatures art shows have raised more than $4,000 for the museum. All artwork is donated.

The 7"x9" format is not a common size, said Chris Harrell, executive director and curator of the museum.

It's a size which many artists may find challenging.

"These pieces, for the most part, they (the artists) do specifically for the end of the year show/sale," he said. "Usually they (the artists) do much larger pieces."

The style and scenes are similar to those that the artist would usually paint or photograph, and generally in what that particular artist finds of interest.

The Miniatures show is a perfect segue into the New Year Varied Impressions show, which opens with an artist's reception on Thursday, January 14.

Unlike the Miniatures art exhibit, which can be conceptual of most anything, the Varied Impressions show must represent the City of Tulare, or Tulare County.

In the past, the show has exhibited some unusual pieces, Harrell said, such as an adaptation in clay of earthworms coming up out of the ground by Piet Eppinga and a painting of golf memories by George Tanimoto.

The Varied Impressions exhibit will run through February 27. Much of the artwork featured in the show is available or purchase.

Both shows may be viewed during regular museum hours, Thursday-Saturday, 10am-4pm, and the third Sunday of every month, September-May, from 12:30-4pm. Admission to the museum is $5 for adults, $3 for seniors and $2 for students, except on Sundays, when admission is free. Access to all exhibits is included in admission.

Miniatures art raffle tickets are $5/each or three for $10. Tickets may be purchased any time up until March 12. The drawing will be held on March 16. Winners will be notified by March 30.

The Tulare Historical Museum is located at 444 West Tulare Avenue. For more information visit, www.tularehistoricalmuseum.org or call (559) 686-2074.

A Bridal Odyssey Provides Wedding Planners Everything All in One Place

Staff Reports

In Tulare and Kings County thousands of marriage licenses are issued every year. The average couple spends 18 months planning their wedding. The bride may drive hundreds of miles in search of the right fashion, flowers and design for her wedding.

Local area brides can reduce the pollution all that driving around generates by going to where more than 70 of the wedding professionals are on Saturday, January 17. More than 400 brides-to-be will converge at the Visalia Wyndham Hotel, formerly the Visalia Holiday Inn, comparing services and prices all in one location, all in one day.

Since 1997, "A Bridal Odyssey" produced by Mancini Production, is the longest running, nationally recognized show in Central California, drawing close to 1,200 guests from throughout the Central Valley to discuss their wedding needs. This event is ideal for brides and grooms to enjoy the afternoon, discuss wedding plans and be introduced to services from throughout the area.

The featured fashion show begins at 2:30pm with surround-sound and theater lighting, which highlights the afternoon. The show will focus on the newest bridal trends and fashions from Blush Bridal and Tux n Tails in Visalia. The show is designed for the audience to experience the full range of emotions that surround the wedding event. These productions are well beyond the typical bridal fashion show. Many brides and their friends return year after year to enjoy these productions.

Several thousands of dollars in prizes, trips, honeymoon stays, will be given away throughout the afternoon. The "Sweet Treasures" wedding cake dive is always an exciting event at the show's end.

Several registered brides are invited to 'dive' into a wedding cake for valuable gifts, which include a honeymoon stay. These ladies enjoy the fun of getting a little messy, knowing that each will be a winner.

"A Bridal Odyssey" is a nationally recognized show and receives many benefits from national companies that share at the shows. This year, each paid registered bride-to-be will receive a free year's subscription to Bride Magazine, one of the most recognized magazines in the country.

Debbie Mancini is a member of Bridal Show Producers International (BSPI). "A Bridal Odyssey" is registered as a national show and endorsed by Bride's Magazine, Wedding Wire, BridalShowsNearYou.com, and Premier Bride Magazine, and is a sponsored show by the Association for Wedding Professionals International (AFWPI).

Brides can register online at www.abridalodyssey.com. Doors open at 11am. Admission is $12.00 at the door.

Plan Your Summer Party at the Porterville City Pool

Looking for a venue to hold a summer birthday party, family reunion or end of the school year activity? Why not have it at the City Pool. Porterville Parks and Leisure is now accepting pool reservations for summer 2016. The City Pool is fun for all ages, affordable and requires little to no set up. Have a splashin' great time by reserving it for exclusive use for your event.

Reservations for school events can be made for the period of May 23 - June 10. The bookings are not to exceed six hours in one day and schools must have a 30 minute break in between parties. The general public can reserve private bookings for Saturdays and Sundays of May 28 - August 7. Hourly rates for use of the facility begin at $76 and vary based on the number of guests.

Reservations can be made at the Heritage Center, 256 E. Orange Avenue. They will be taken on a first come, first served basis. Early booking is advised as available time slots are limited. For more information, visit the City of Porterville website or call (559) 791-7695 for more.

About the City Pool

The 5,590 square foot City Pool has a capacity for 280 swimmers and features a modern zero depth entry design with play equipment, a lap swim area, dive tank, and diving board. The 137-foot water slide is a popular attraction among all ages. Located at 97 N. Park Drive, the facility has lifeguards on duty at all times and also offers convenient access to Murry Park and the Porterville Golf Course.

ALTURA
CENTERS FOR HEALTH
a californiahealth+ center

LOCATIONS

Pediatrics
1186 E Leland
Tulare, CA 93274

South Tulare
3035 E Bardsley Ave
Tulare, CA 93274

Multi Services
1203 N Cherry St
Tulare, CA 93274

Main Clinic
1101 N Cherry St
Tulare, CA 93274

Annex
1249 N Cherry St
Tulare, CA 93274

Woodville
16686 Road 168
Woodville, CA 93257

Administration
1201 N Cherry St
Tulare, CA 93274

West Tulare
1500 W Tulare Dr
Tulare, CA 93274

COMING SOON! NEW **WEST TULARE LOCATION**

(559) 686-9097 • ALTURA.ORG

Tulare Museum

Continued from p. 17

own legacy with the museum.

"Terry has been an integral part of the museum since 1994," he said.

Brazil served as executive director from 2008-2015 and now continues as museum director. Both Brazil and Harrell were hired by the museum's board of directors.

Group tours are welcome at the Tulare Historical Museum with advance notice. Tulare elementary school students take field trips to the museum as part of the curriculum, but any school group from within the county is welcome, as well as Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, 4-H groups, senior or retirement center groups and service clubs.

The Tulare Historical Museum is openThursday-Saturday, 10am-4pm, and the third Sunday of every month, September-May, from 12:30-4pm. Admission to the museum is $5 for adults, $3 for seniors and $2 for students, except on Sundays, when admission is free. Access to all exhibits is included in admission.

Rockhounds to Converge at Tule Gem and Mineral Club Gemboree

Nancy Vigran

For 60 years, those with an interest in the hobby and artistry of rocks have come together to put on the Tule Gem and Mineral Show which will be held this year on Saturday and Sunday, January 16 and 17, at the Exeter Memorial Building.

The club was founded in 1952,and four years later the first show was held.

"There are members still today who were involved in the formation of the club and that first show," said Don Vieira, a longtime member of the club and show organizer.

The show is a chance for club members and others who are a part of California Federation of Mineralogical Society clubs up and down the state to organize and show their collections and work. There will be 40 showcases this year, Vieira said, mostly from local participants.

Vieira himself will have two cases, one he calls Flora & Fauna, which displays geodes cut into slices that reflect different aspects of nature including a gull in flight, a fish, and an owl apparently wearing glasses. The other represents some of the cabochons he has cut. A cabochon is a stone or rock that has been polished and perhaps shaped, but not cut or faceted.

Other showcases may display spheres, rock collections from a particular geographic location, faceted gems and more.

The showcases are judged during the show in two capacities. Once by the Tule Gem and Mineral Club president. The other is by visitors, who pick and vote for their favorite case, throughout the length of the show. Each win is coveted, Vieira said.

During the show demonstrations will take place in faceting, cabochon shaping, wire wrapping and, new this year, fossil painting and sand mining.

A treasure hunt takes place for children 12 and under, although their parents often like to participate as well, Vieira said. Hunters pick up a check list and seek out in
which showcase an item may appear, write it down and take the completed hunt list to win a polished rock. Some 20-25 items are on the treasure hunt list.

Twelve commercial dealers will offer everything from rock tumblers and other lapidary art equipment to jewelry mounts and settings, books and, well, rocks.

A silent auction will also take place for coarse rocks that can be polished and cut into beautiful works of art, Vieira said. And, every 30 minutes, a raffle item is given away; winners must be present.

Visitors view the various gem showcases at a former Tule Gem and Mineral Show. Courtesy/Tule Gem and Mineral Society

The Tule Gem and Mineral Society has approximately 85 members and meets monthly at the Farmersville Senior Center. Members' ages vary from young children, whose parents have joined the society to a 95-year-old founding member. Meetings generally include a guest or club member speaker on minerals, jewelry or related subject matter. The club takes three to four field trips per year, including one-day local trips and weekend trips a bit further away.

Club members also participate in educational rock talks for Tulare County elementary grade classrooms, on the three different types of rocks and geological formations and earth sciences.

Show hours are from 10am-5pm on Saturday and 10am-4pm on Sunday. The show is free and so is parking.

For more information on the show, or the club, visit the Tule Gem and Mineral Society website at www.tulegem.com or call, Gayle Bingaman, (559) 802-6029.